HEGEL'S GHOST: EUROPE, THE REFORMATION,
AND THE MIDDLE AGES

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by Constantin Fasolt

> When the strident voices of the polemicists are still, when the grand systems of long-dead theologians fall away, when the sixteenth-century mutations of Christianity are seen entirely in historical context, then the Reformation will be regarded not only as Protestant and northern, but also as Christian and European. Thomas A. Brady, Jr.[1]

The purpose of this essay is conceptual, not empirical. It offers no new facts. At least it does not do so in the sense in which the term "facts" is usually understood, which is to say, as true statements about the past drawn in some demonstrable manner from some definite primary source or group of sources lodged in an archive or a library with an identifiable location. It rather aims to cast existing knowledge into a different mold. It does so by confronting two separate bodies of knowledge with each other in order to regard them from a single point of view. The two bodies of knowledge consist of Reformation historiography and medieval historiography. The single point of view takes the Reformation to stand in a direct line of continuity to European-wide developments beginning around the turn of the millennium, including the creation of a governmental church under the leadership of popes like Gregory VII, Alexander III, and Innocent III.

What makes this essay possible is that its author is neither a medievalist nor an early modernist: not a medievalist, because he spent the better part of his life in the professional study of early modern European history at the University of Chicago; not an early modernist, because he was trained as a medievalist in Heidelberg and at Columbia University in the seminars of Peter Classen, J. M. W. Bean, and John Mundy. His first book, focusing on William Durant the Younger (ca. 1266–1330), bishop of Mende and count of Gévaudan, made a sustained attempt to take the history of the conciliar theory out of a purely intellectual context in order to anchor it in the development of medieval social and political institutions broadly understood.[2] His second book, focusing on Hermann Conring (1606–1681), professor of medicine and politics at the University of Helmstedt, examined the work of one particular early modern thinker in order to trace the limits of historical thought by turning historical methods

[1] Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "Social History," *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (St. Louis 1982) 176.

[2] *Council and Hierarchy: The Political Thought of William Durant the Younger*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 4th series, 16, ed. D. Luscombe (Cambridge 1991).

against themselves.[3] Having written books on either side of the traditional divide be-
tween medieval and modern history—on a medieval Catholic bishop thoroughly
trained in canon law and nothing if not eager to maintain the dominance of the church,
and on an early modern Lutheran polymath thoroughly conversant with methods of
historical criticism and eager to establish freedom of conscience and religious tolera-
tion—has given him a definite perspective on the *longue durée* of European history
that is not widely shared.

 What makes this essay necessary is the damage done to historians' grasp of the
longue durée of European history by the distinction between medieval and modern
history. That damage goes much deeper than is commonly acknowledged. It does not
affect social and economic history as directly as intellectual, cultural, and institutional
history. It is less serious on the medieval side, where it tends to keep medievalists con-
fined to a kind of intellectual ghetto in which they are content to address each other,
occasionally frustrated by the failure of modernists to pay enough attention to
medieval history, but generally secure in the knowledge—sometimes to the point of
condescension—that this is not a problem for themselves, but for the modernists. The
damage is more serious on the modern side, where it leads historians to overestimate
differences between medieval and modern Europe, underestimate the extent to which
modern institutions are indebted to the medieval church, and lose sight of what unites
the European nations and has given them such a peculiar role to play in world history.
It has not been nearly as successfully repaired as longstanding projects to build
bridges from medieval to modern history have led historians to believe, and it
continues to thwart an understanding of European history as a whole. There is a
disconnect. The disconnect is not in European history. It is in the historians—or so at
least is the contention of this essay.

 An essay of this kind is bound to provoke disagreements. It will do so for two very
different reasons. One is that no single person can hope to master the entire range of
knowledge available on subjects as broad as medieval and early modern European
history. That may be sad, and it will irritate the specialists, but it is unavoidable. It is
also entirely familiar and relatively easy to correct by readers who have the special
knowledge that the author lacks. Its worst effects can be forestalled by apologies for
the limits of their expertise and solicitations of criticism of the sort with which schol-
arly authors are properly accustomed to introduce their writings. I offer such
apologies and solicitations here and now.

 The other reason for disagreements is that this essay raises questions about the
meaning of terms like "medieval," "modern," "Europe," and "Reformation." The an-
swers to those questions depend to some degree on decisions that historians make
about the proper way to use such terms. Such decisions are never unanimous and they
change over time. They can be justified and they can be explained, but they cannot be
based entirely on empirical investigation or justified by offering a missing piece of
information. Disagreements over questions of meaning are therefore more intractable
than disagreements that arise from ignorance. They are especially intractable in
history because historians are trained to base themselves as far as possible on
something other than their own opinion, namely the evidence, and even more so

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[3] *The Limits of History* (Chicago 2004).

because the meaning of any terms they use can itself be viewed as a subject of historical investigation. Historians accordingly find it particularly difficult to treat questions of meaning in distinction from questions of fact. That leads to misunderstanding and confusion.

In order to reduce the potential for confusion, I offer a few preliminary clarifications. First, this essay is deliberately polemical in style. It is intended to provoke medieval and early modern historians into reconsidering and perhaps even abandoning some fundamental concepts to which this essay claims they are improperly endeared. Polemical formulations help in such an endeavor because they are clear, they focus the attention, and they tend to elicit strong responses. But they can be a hindrance if they are taken at face value or *ad hominem*. Let me therefore assure my readers of my hope and trust that they will not confuse rhetorically pointed formulations with what I take to be the truth about the past. Allow me also to affirm my respect for the scholars on whose work I shall touch below, no matter how polemical my tone. My attack is aimed at certain ways of thinking about the European past, not at the people whose ways they are.

Second, readers may wonder about the emphasis this essay places on the Reformation. Why not focus on the Renaissance instead? The reason is not that the Renaissance is any less important for the course of European history. The Renaissance started earlier and may well have affected the various areas of Europe more uniformly and more deeply than the Reformation. It may therefore carry a greater share of the historical responsibility for turning medieval into modern Europe than does the Reformation. The reason rather is that the problems the Renaissance poses for a grasp of European history as a whole are not as acute as those posed by the Reformation. P. O. Kristeller and his followers succeeded to a remarkable degree in showing how deeply the Renaissance was grounded in medieval history. Heiko Oberman, Bernd Moeller, and their followers tried to do the same for the Reformation, but without the same success. The work of Reformation historians retains a residual identification with nations and confessions that conflicts sharply with the perspective adopted in this essay. This is the problem that most needs to be addressed. So long as it has not been treated, it will remain impossible to recognize that both Renaissance and Reformation are part and parcel of one and the same historical development.[4]

Third, readers may find my treatment of medieval history to be sketchy and thinly annotated, especially by comparison to my treatment of Reformation historiography. That is intentional. My purpose is not to offer new information about medieval history, but to confront a perfectly familiar view of medieval history with Reformation historiography. To say that it is perfectly familiar is not the same as saying that it is uncontroversial. Medievalists do not agree on it by any means, either in general or in details. But it is to say that it is neither new nor my own invention. Ernest Gellner, R. I. Moore, and Robert Bartlett have stated it in recent years with special force and

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[4] For an attempt to relate Renaissance and Reformation to each other see my "Religious Authority and Ecclesiastical Governance," *The Renaissance World*, ed. John Jeffries Martin (London 2008) 364–380, forthcoming. For a compatible perspective on the Renaissance see John Monfasani, "The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages," *Bulletino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 108 (2006) 165–185.

clarity.[5] But its basic ingredients—the importance of the transformation of European society in the tenth and eleventh centuries; the distinction between a local rural culture and a far-flung high culture of clerics, knights, and merchants; the role of the church in building institutions of European scope; the alliance between the clergy and the European aristocracy; the conflict between secular and regular clergy; the gradual development of monopolies of power; and the decline of medieval representative institutions—are old news. In varying combinations and with varying degrees of emphasis and elaboration they figure prominently in the work of medievalists as different from each other as Marc Bloch, Geoffrey Barraclough, Richard Southern, and John Mundy.[6] As long ago as 1939 Norbert Elias gave what remains the single most compelling account of their dynamic.[7] If there is anything new about the sketch of medieval history I offer below, it is the starkly abstract manner in which it puts some of the most familiar features of medieval history into bold relief and places them into a systematic relationship with each other—and with the Reformation.[8]

Fourth, this essay maintains that the changes occurring in the tenth and eleventh centuries are more important for understanding the course of European history as a whole than Renaissance or Reformation. It thus proposes a periodization of European history in which the break supposedly dividing medieval from modern history loses its traditional significance. As Richard Southern put it, "the many-sided 'Investiture Controversy,' … is the first major dispute in modern history."[9] But if it places the beginning of modern history in the eleventh century, it does so mainly for the sake of lifting the spell that confessional and national categories of historical interpretation continue to cast on the minds of historians. Its purpose is not to enter into empirical debates about demographic change, the revival of cities, the conditions of serfdom, the Gregorian Revolution, or any other of the many different factors that went into the "first European revolution," much less the relative weight to be attributed to each of them. So long as readers can agree that it is no longer plausible to view the Reformation as the antithesis of the high medieval church as which it used to figure in both Protestant and Catholic ideology, the purpose of this essay will have been served.

In short, this essay is not intended to enlighten medievalists about the Middle Ages, or early modernists about the Reformation, but to put the former into conversation with the latter. It focuses on the Reformation in order to provoke both into reconsidering what exactly separates them from each other and perhaps allow them to realize how much more they have in common than they appear to think. It aims to show how odd it is for social historians *not* to view the Reformation as a direct continuation of basic historical trends—urbanization, the spread of literacy, the

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[5] Ernest Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book: The Structure of Human History* (Chicago 1988); R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215* (Oxford 2000); Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (Princeton 1993).

[6] Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago 1961); Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Medieval Papacy* (London 1968); Richard W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven 1953); John Hine Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages, 1150–1300*, 3rd ed. (London 2000).

[7] Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols. (Basel 1939).

[8] For more about the reasoning behind that sketch and the evidence on which it is founded see Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy* (n. 2 above) passim, and the literature cited there.

[9] Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages* (n. 6 above) 133.

formation of social and political monopolies, even Max Weber's inner-worldly asceticism—that began in the high Middle Ages. The medieval part is thin because medievalists sin by omission. They have their part of the story mainly right. They merely need to be encouraged to extend it into the early modern period. The early modern part is thick, because Reformation historians sin by commission. They need to abandon their faith in the line dividing the Reformation from the church of Pope Innocent III. If I may draw on Thomas Müntzer's useful formulation—useful both because it embodies an accurate insight and because the wrath roused by its author among Protestants and Catholics alike reveals how much they had in common—historians continue to deny the debt the "pope in Wittenberg" owed to the pope in Rome.[10] That denial needs to be confronted.

<div align="center">REFORMATION HISTORIOGRAPHY</div>

According to an old historical tradition the Reformation was made necessary by the corruption of the medieval church, begun by Martin Luther, carried forward by the German people, and driven by a new understanding of the Christian faith. It destroyed the unity of medieval Christianity, replaced good works and laws with faith and the Word of Scripture, put an end to the abuses practiced by medieval monks and clerics, freed the state from the yoke of ecclesiastical—especially papal—supremacy, and gave liberty to the individual. So understood, the Reformation marked an epoch in world history. Its significance was equaled only by the end of antiquity. *Reformatio* is an ancient term, and reformations were a dime a dozen throughout the Middle Ages.[11] But *the* Reformation was unique: it put an end to the Middle Ages and started modern history.[12]

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[10] In his *Vindication and Refutation*, Müntzer maintained that Luther had "set himself up in place of the pope" and called him the "Wittenberg pope." See *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer*, ed. and trans. Peter Matheson (Edinburgh 1988) 339.

[11] Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA 1959); Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (New York 1996); Karl Augustin Frech, *Reform an Haupt und Gliedern: Untersuchung zur Entwicklung und Verwendung der Formulierung im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter* (Frankfurt and New York 1992); Berndt Hamm, "Von der spätmittelalterlichen reformatio zur Reformation: Der Prozess normativer Zentrierung von Religion und Gesellschaft in Deutschland," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 84 (1993) 7–82.

[12] For a classic formulation see Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, Werke, 12 (Frankfurt 1970) 492, in English *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York 1956) 412: "The Reformation resulted from the *corruption of the Church*. That corruption was not an accidental phenomenon; it was not the mere *abuse* of power and dominion. A corrupt state of things is very frequently represented as an 'abuse'; it is taken for granted that the foundation was good—the system, the institution itself is faultless—but that the passion, the subjective interest, in short the arbitrary volition of men has made use of that which in itself was good to further its own selfish ends, and that all that is required to be done is to remove these adventitious elements. On this showing the institute in question escapes obloquy, and the evil that disfigures it appears something foreign to it. But when accidental abuse of a good thing really occurs, it is limited to particularity. A great and general corruption of such large and comprehensive scope as a Church, is quite another thing.—The corruption of the Church was a native growth; the principle of that corruption is to be looked for in the fact that the specific and definite embodiment of Deity which it recognizes, is sensuous—that the external in a coarse material form, is enshrined in its inmost being. (The refining transformation which Art supplied was not sufficient). The higher Spirit—that of the World—has already expelled the Spiritual from it [i.e., from the church]; it [i.e., the church] finds nothing to interest it in the Spiritual or in occupation with it; thus it retains that specific and definite embodiment;—*i.e.*, we have the sensuous immediate subjectivity, not refined by it to Spiritual subjectivity.—Henceforth it [i.e., the church] occupies *a position of inferiority to the World-Spirit;* the latter has already transcended it." (Emphasis in the original; text in brackets added by

This description is brutally brief. But it suffices to capture two fundamental characteristics to which, according to the tradition, *the* Reformation owes its singularity. They are, first, the break with Catholicism and, second, the break with the Middle Ages. Exactly how these breaks ought to be understood or why they occurred in Germany need not detain us here. It is enough to keep in mind that the tradition relies on two elementary distinctions. One is a theological distinction between Protestants and Catholics; the other, a chronological distinction between the Middle Ages and Modernity. These distinctions are elementary in the specific sense that they are not simply empirical (though both distinctions do, of course, rely for their justification on empirical observations). They are rather analytically embedded in the very concept of *the* Reformation. Should it turn out that the distinction between Protestants and Catholics leaves something to be desired, and that the division of European history into a medieval and a modern phase is unsound, the concept of *the* Reformation—as if there were only one deserving the title in this emphatic sense—would disintegrate. *The* Reformation would have to be regarded as *a* reformation. It would undoubtedly retain its historical individuality, as is the case for every other thing in history, and it might well continue to claim greater significance than other reformations that came before or after. But it would no longer have the unique ability to mark the transition from the second to the third of the three phases into which tradition has divided the history of the world.

I am not sure who first invented the strange alloy of theological hostility with historical dogma from which the concept of *the* Reformation has been forged. I have no objections to regarding Ranke as the metallurgist in chief, so long as Hegel is not forgotten.[13] But I am certain that it has long since caused considerable pain in the heads of historians, not unlike the neuralgia that can be caused by dentists who put gold fillings next to silver-amalgam. Ever since the nineteenth century observers of European history and society as distinguished as Karl Marx,[14] Friedrich Engels,[15] Max Weber,[16]

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me.) On p. 417 Hegel sums up: "This is the essence of the Reformation: Man is in his very nature destined to be free."

[13] Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Reformation in Germany*, trans. Sarah Austin (London 1905). "[Ranke] believed, as did many others, that Protestantism was both a superior form of Christianity and the proper, even destined, religion of a modern German nation. This is the essence of the confessional-national view of the Protestant Reformation, which Ranke and his disciples made canonical in German historical writing." Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *The Politics of the Reformation in Germany: Jacob Sturm (1489–1553) of Strasbourg* (Atlantic Highlands 1997) 1.

[14] "Luther, without question, overcame servitude through devotion but only by substituting servitude through *conviction*. He shattered the faith in authority by restoring the authority of faith. He transformed the priests into laymen by turning laymen into priests. He liberated man from external religiosity by making religiosity the innermost essence of man. He liberated the body from its chains because he fettered the heart with chains. But if Protestantism was not the solution it did at least pose the problem correctly. It was no longer a question, thereafter, of the layman's struggle against the priest outside himself, but of his struggle against his *own internal priest*, against his own *priestly nature*. And if the Protestant metamorphosis of German laymen into priests emancipated the lay popes—the *princes* together with their clergy, the privileged and the philistines—the philosophical metamorphosis of the priestly Germans into men will emancipate the *people*. But just as emancipation will not be confined to princes, so the *secularization* of property will not be limited to the *confiscation of church property*, which was practiced especially by hypocritical Prussia." Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York 1978) 60–61.

[15] "The German ideology of today sees in the struggles to which the Middle Ages had succumbed nothing but violent theological bickerings, this notwithstanding our modern experiences. Had the people of that time only been able to reach an understanding concerning the celestial things, say our patriotic historians

Ernst Troeltsch,[17] Lucien Febvre,[18] and Norbert Elias[19] have, each in his own characteristic manner, clenched their jaws and ground their teeth when forced to taste *the* Reformation.

and wise statesmen, there would have been no ground whatever for struggle over earthly affairs. These ideologists were gullible enough to accept on their face value all the illusions which an epoch maintains about itself, or which the ideologists of a certain period maintained about that period. … In the so-called religious wars of the Sixteenth Century, very positive material class-interests were at play, and those wars were class wars just as were the later collisions in England and France. If the class struggles of that time appear to bear religious earmarks, if the interests, requirements and demands of the various classes hid themselves behind a religious screen, it little changes the actual situation, and is to be explained by the conditions of the time." Friedrich Engels, "The Peasant War in Germany," *The German Revolutions: The Peasant War in Germany, and Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, ed. Leonard Krieger, trans. Moissaye J. Olgin (Chicago 1967) 33–34.

[16] "The emancipation from economic traditionalism appears, no doubt, to be a factor which would greatly strengthen the tendency to doubt the sanctity of the religious tradition, as of all traditional authorities. But it is necessary to note, what has often been forgotten, that the Reformation meant not the elimination of the Church's control over everyday life, but rather the substitution of a new form of control for the previous one. It meant the repudiation of a control which was very lax, at that time scarcely perceptible in practice, and hardly more than formal, in favour of a regulation of the whole of conduct which, penetrating to all departments of private and public life, was infinitely burdensome and earnestly enforced. … One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born—that is what this discussion has sought to demonstrate—from the spirit of Christian asceticism." Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York 1958) 36, 180.

[17] "If we are seeking a purely historical definition of Protestantism, we soon recognise that, for Protestantism as a whole, it cannot be immediately formulated. For modern Protestantism as a whole, even when it carries on the orthodox dogmatic traditions, is in point of fact completely changed. The genuine early Protestantism of Lutheranism and Calvinism is, as an organic whole, in spite of its anti-Catholic doctrine of salvation, entirely a Church civilisation like that of the Middle Ages. … If all these considerations be taken into account, it becomes obvious that Protestantism cannot be supposed to have directly paved the way for the modern world. On the contrary, it appears at first, in spite of all its great new ideas, as a revival and reinforcement of the ideal of authoritatively imposed Church-civilisation, as a complete reaction to medieval thinking, which sweeps away such beginnings of a free and secular civilisation as had already been toilsomely established." Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World*, trans. W. Montgomery (Philadelphia 1986) 34–35, 51–52.

[18] "To seek within a tight circle of events and motives *the* starting point (as if, in fact, there had been only *one* starting point) of a movement as vast as the French Reformation developing within a country with a very rich intellectual civilization, and to fail to recognize the profound sources of an extremely powerful train of ideas and sentiments which, mixed up though they were with so many worldly interests, no objective researcher could subsequently fail to identify, means exposing oneself to scorn and the most fanciful interpretations—precisely those which confront one another in the texts we have quoted above. Worse still, it is then quite impossible to form a picture of the movement; its curve cannot be drawn because one did not begin with rigorous calculation of the initial co-ordinates." Lucien Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation: A Badly-Put Question?" *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, ed. Peter Burke, trans. K. Folca (New York 1973) 46.

[19] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford 1994), stands out as one of the most sustained attacks on the notion that lies at the core of the traditional view of both Renaissance and Reformation: the notion of "the individual." Not coincidentally, in *State Formation and Civilization,* i.e., the second volume of *The Civilizing Process*, much less widely received than the first volume on *The History of Manners*, Elias worked hard to show that the rupture seemingly dividing medieval from modern history results from a failure to grasp long-term social processes. As he put it in the preface he wrote for the second edition of his work in 1968 (pp. 203–204) in criticizing familiar accounts of the early modern self, "We have here an example of how closely the inability to conceive long-term social processes (i.e., structured changes in the figurations formed by large numbers of interdependent human beings) or to understand the human beings forming such figurations is connected to a certain type of image of man and of self-perception. People to whom it seems self-evident that their own self (or their ego, or whatever else it may be called) exists, as it were, 'inside' them, isolated from all the other people and things 'outside,' have difficulty assigning significance to all those facts which indicate that individuals live from the first in interdependence with others. They have difficulty conceiving people as relatively but not absolutely autonomous and interdependent individuals forming changeable figurations with one another. Since the former self-

During the twentieth century their discomfort took hold of the historical profession. As early as 1903 Johannes Haller, the great Protestant historian of the papacy, found it so difficult to reconcile the evidence of the papacy's own records in the recently opened papal archives with Protestant attitudes toward the medieval church that he was never able to finish *Papsttum und Kirchenreform*, his book about the prehistory of the Reformation, and wrote a judgmental, well-informed, and justly celebrated history of the ancient and medieval papacy instead.[20] In the 1930s Geoffrey Barraclough followed suit by demonstrating in painstaking detail how misleading it is to condemn the medieval church for abuses without understanding the social and institutional realities with which it had to contend.[21] At about the same time Justus Hashagen accumulated abundant evidence to show how closely medieval secular and spiritual authorities collaborated in lording it over their subjects, confounding both the myth of the tyranny the medieval church supposedly exercised over the state and the belief that territorial church-government developed out of the Reformation.[22] And once Bernd Moeller laid down his famous challenge to the stranglehold in which Protestant theologians had been holding the study of the Reformation, the floodgates were opened and a veritable deluge of historical scholarship washed over the landscape that Hegel and Ranke had cultivated.[23]

The results have been impressive.[24] Gone are the days when late medieval theology and church history could be dismissed as nothing better than a decline from the high standards set by Thomas Aquinas, a mere precursor to the glories of the Reformation, or a sad tale of superstition and abuse.[25] The late medieval church has come to be freed from the worst taints of corruption and can even be praised for the intensity of a devotion that was not necessarily helped by Protestant intellectualizing.[26] A whole line

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perception seems self-evident to those subscribing to it, they cannot easily take account of facts which show that this kind of perception is itself limited to particular societies, that it comes into being in conjunction with certain kinds of interdependencies, of social bonds between people—in short, that it is a structural peculiarity of a specific stage in the development of civilization, corresponding to a specific stage of differentiation and individualization of human groups."

[20] Johannes Haller, *Papsttum und Kirchenreform: Vier Kapitel zur Geschichte des ausgehenden Mittelalters* (Berlin 1903) v–x; idem, *Das Papsttum: Idee und Wirklichkeit*, 5 vols. (Reinbek bei Hamburg 1965).

[21] Geoffrey Barraclough, *Papal Provisions: Aspects of Church History, Constitutional, Legal, and Administrative in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford 1935), building on Ulrich Stutz, *Die Eigenkirche als Element des mittelalterlich-germanischen Kirchenrechtes* (Berlin 1895).

[22] Justus Hashagen, *Staat und Kirche vor der Reformation: Eine Untersuchung der vorreformatorischen Bedeutung der Laieneinflüsse in der Kirche* (Essen 1931).

[23] Bernd Moeller, "Problems of Reformation Research," *Imperial Cities and the Reformation*, trans. H. C. Erik Midelfort and Mark U. Edwards, Jr. (1965; Philadelphia 1972) 3–16.

[24] For overviews, see Ozment, ed., *Reformation Europe* (n. 1 above); William S. Maltby, ed., *Reformation Europe: A Guide to Research II* (St. Louis 1992); Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, ed., *The German People and the Reformation* (Ithaca 1988); C. Scott Dixon, ed., *The German Reformation: The Essential Readings* (Oxford 1999); Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Changing One's Mind: Transformations in Reformation History from a Germanist's Perspective," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005) 1101–1127.

[25] Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA 1963); Francis Oakley, *The Western Church in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca 1979); Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform, 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven 1980).

[26] William Abel Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge 1955); Etienne Delaruelle, E.-R. Labande, and Paul Ourliac, *L'église au temps du grand schisme et de la crise conciliaire, 1378–1449* (Paris 1962); Bernd Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500," *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*, ed. Steven E. Ozment (Chicago 1971) 50–75; John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700*

of scholarship has given medieval Catholic Christianity solid title to the very same promotion of liberty that once seemed an exclusively Protestant prerogative.[27] What used to be a sharp dividing line between the Middle Ages and the Reformation has been replaced by a fine appreciation for the continuities extending from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. "Early modern history" or "late medieval and early modern history" have come to be favored designations for the period because they avoid an undue stress on rupture.[28] Precisely the same enhanced respect for continuity has entered deep into scholarship on the Italian Renaissance and Humanism.[29] That in turn has helped to highlight the degree to which Renaissance, Humanism, and Reformation were allies rather than opponents.[30] The plural "reformations" has become a popular alternative to the singular "reformation."[31] The history of the Holy Roman Empire has been extricated from nationalist narratives and reconstituted on more appropriate foundations.[32] Historians have highlighted the polycentric origins and full complexity of the "age of reform."[33] They have investigated the degree to which the Reformation owed its success to the particular conditions and aspirations of

(Oxford 1985); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580* (New Haven 1992).

[27] Gerd Tellenbach, *Libertas: Kirche und Weltordnung im Zeitalter des Investiturstreites* (Stuttgart 1936); Brian Tierney, *Religion, Law, and the Growth of Constitutional Thought, 1150–1650* (Cambridge 1982); Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights: Studies on Natural Rights, Natural Law, and Church Law, 1150–1625* (Atlanta 1997); Francis Oakley, "Legitimation by Consent: The Question of the Medieval Roots," *Viator* 14 (1983) 303–335; John Neville Figgis, *Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, 1414–1625*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1916).

[28] What was started in the 1950s by Erich Hassinger, *Das Werden des neuzeitlichen Europa, 1300–1600* (Braunschweig 1959), has come to fruition in Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, 2 vols. (Leiden 1994–1995). As M. D. Knowles put it in 1969, "Though hitherto all attempts have failed to remove the notional wall between medieval and modern, renaissance and reformation, individual historians, and the framers of courses at more than one 'new' university, have created a third, and hitherto nameless, historical period of change and birth between 1349 and 1648." M. D. Knowles, "Some Trends in Scholarship, 1868–1968, in the Field of Medieval History," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 19 (1969) 149–150.

[29] Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought, 1: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York 1961); Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden 2000); Monfasani, "The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages" (n. 4 above) 165–185.

[30] Charles Edward Trinkaus, *"In Our Image and Likeness": Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (Chicago 1970); Bernd Moeller, "The German Humanists and the Beginnings of the Reformation," *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (n. 23 above) 19–38; Charles E. Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman, eds., *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Leiden 1974); William J. Bouwsma, "Renaissance and Reformation: An Essay in their Affinities and Connections," *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden 1974) 127–149.

[31] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford 1993); Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Cambridge, MA 1996); James D. Tracy, *Europe's Reformations, 1450–1650* (Lanham 1999).

[32] James A. Vann and Steven W. Rowan, eds., *The Old Reich: Essays on German Political Institutions, 1495–1806* (Bruxelles 1974); John Boyer and Julius Kirshner, eds., *Politics and Society in the Holy Roman Empire, 1500–1806* (Chicago 1986); Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Ithaca 1971); Karl Otmar Freiherr von Aretin, *Das Alte Reich, 1648–1806*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart 1993–1997).

[33] "The beginnings of religious reform were polycentric and many-stranded. Confessional historiography has vastly distorted the full complexity of the 'age of reform,' as it should more correctly be called." Robert W. Scribner and C. Scott Dixon, *The German Reformation*, 2nd ed. (New York 2003) 5.

late medieval German cities.[34] They have focused similar attention on the countryside, cast the study of the Peasants War in entirely new forms, and debated whether urban and rural folk played basically similar or basically different parts in Reformation history.[35] They have studied the beliefs of ordinary people in unprecedented detail and turned their attention from the academic theories of intellectuals to forms of ritual and magic practiced in daily life.[36] They have asked whether the Reformation achieved its goals by changing the minds of ordinary people, and some of them have answered that it failed.[37] They have begun to pay as much attention to women as to men.[38] They have made new efforts to understand relations between Jews and Christians.[39] They have written histories of early modern Catholicism that emphasize Catholic attempts to reform the church, highlight similarities between Protestants and Catholics, and reveal what may be called the modernity of Catholicism.[40] They have proposed to view Reformation and Counter-Reformation as two parallel advances in a converging movement to impose Christianity more firmly on a population pagan or ignorant of Christianity at best.[41] Inspired by Max Weber and Gerhard Oestreich, they have

[34] Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (n. 23 above); Steven E. Ozment, *The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland* (New Haven 1975); Thomas A. Brady, Jr., *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450–1550* (Cambridge 1985); Berndt Hamm, *Bürgertum und Glaube: Konturen der städtischen Reformation* (Göttingen 1996).

[35] Peter Blickle, *The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants' War from a New Perspective*, trans. Erik Midelfort and Thomas Brady (Baltimore 1982); Peter Blickle, *Communal Reformation: The Quest for Salvation in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Atlantic Highlands, NJ and London 1992); Winfried Schulze, *Bäuerlicher Widerstand und feudale Herrschaft in der frühen Neuzeit* (Stuttgart and Bad Cannstatt 1980).

[36] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in 16th and 17th Century England* (New York 1971); Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge 1981); Robert W. Scribner, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)* ed. Lyndal Roper (Leiden 2001); Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Reformation of Ritual: An Interpretation of Early Modern Germany* (London 1997); Craig Koslofsky, *The Reformation of the Dead: Death and Ritual in Early Modern Germany, 1450–1700* (New York 2000).

[37] Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore 1978); James M. Kittelson, "Successes and Failures in the German Reformation: The Report from Strasbourg," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 73 (1982) 153–174; Geoffrey Parker, "Success and Failure During the First Century of the Reformation," *Past and Present* 136 (1992) 43–82.

[38] Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford 1989); Merry Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1994); Heide Wunder, *He is the Sun, She Is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge, MA 1998); Ulinka Rublack, ed., *Gender in Early Modern German History* (Cambridge 2002).

[39] R. Po-chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann, eds., *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge and New York 1995); Dean Phillip Bell, *Sacred Communities: Jewish and Christian Identities in Fifteenth-Century Germany* (Boston and Leiden 2001); Dean Phillip Bell and Stephen G. Burnett, eds., *Jews, Judaism, and the Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Leiden and Boston 2006).

[40] Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, trans. Ernest Graf, 2 vols. (St. Louis 1957–1961); H. Outram Evennett, *The Spirit of the Counter Reformation*, ed. John Bossy (Cambridge 1968); R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* (Cambridge 1998); Robert Bireley, *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation* (New York 1999); John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA 2000).

[41] "The hypothesis, therefore, which we should like to propose as a direction for research is the following: on the eve of the Reformation, the average westerner was but superficially christianized. In this context, the two Reformations, Luther's and Rome's, were two processes, which apparently competed, but in actual fact converged, by which the masses were Christianized and religion spiritualized." Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation* (London 1977) 161; cf. John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986) 519–552.

developed systematic theories of "confessionalization" and the imposition of "social discipline" that seek to rewrite the history of the early modern confessions—Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic—in a manner explicitly intended to remove confessional criteria from the prominent spot they used to occupy on the historical stage and focus attention instead on the degree to which Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics were engaged in more or less the same social processes leading to more or less the same intensification of the authority of the state.[42] In short, historians today know how to speak in registers that range from religion and ideas to social science and cultural studies, in the language of Protestants no less than that of Catholics and non-believers, at length, with eloquence, and with heartfelt conviction about the historical iniquities embodied in theologically motivated forms of periodization.

Given such advances in historical scholarship and the doubts they have sown about the Hegelo-Rankean account of *the* Reformation in the innermost sanctum of the historical profession, one can well understand why many historians believe that the old alloy has long ago been melted down and is now being forged into a radically new perspective on the European past.[43] It seems as though the tyranny once exercised over Reformation scholarship by confessional and national ideologies had been defeated. But if one takes a closer look, the optimism with which contemporary historians tend to celebrate the gains they have made over the past half-century or so turns out to be not as well founded as one might think.

To be sure, overt assertions of the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism or the reverse, not to mention allegations of the special service rendered by the German people to liberty and modernity, though they can still be hunted down in the nooks and crannies of alternative scholarly cultures, avoid the limelight they once sought. Professional historians know better than to risk being caught red-handed with the traditional interpretation of the Reformation as the revolutionary beginning of modern history. They tend to fear being tarred with the brushes of "romantic idealism," "the

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[42] Ernst W. Zeeden, *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen: Grundlagen und Wege der Konfessionsbildung im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe* (München 1965); Wolfgang Reinhard, "Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977) 226–252; Wolfgang Reinhard, "Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 10 (1983) 257–277; Heinz Schilling, "Die Konfessionalisierung im Reich: Religiöser und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland zwischen 1555 und 1620," *Historische Zeitschrift* 246 (1988) 1–45; Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550–1750* (London 1989); John M. Headley, Hans J. Hillerbrand, and Anthony J. Papalas, eds., *Confessionalization in Europe, 1555–1700: Essays in Honor and Memory of Bodo Nischan* (Aldershot 2004). Cf. Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. Brigitta Oestreich and H. G. Koenigsberger, trans. David McLintock (Cambridge 1982); Winfried Schulze, "Gerhard Oestreichs Begriff 'Sozialdisziplinierung' in der frühen Neuzeit," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 14 (1987) 265–302.

[43] "The past decade of research has seen a retreat from a narrowly confessional 'religious history' of the Reformation, and much greater discussion about the broader context of religious reform. ... The implications of such discussion for a general interpretation of the German Reformation have not yet been drawn out, and they often find little mention in general textbooks. However, they signal a radical change in our understanding of the Reformation and its importance for early modern European history." Scribner and Dixon, *The German Reformation* (n. 33 above) ix, initially written in 1986. "These two breakthroughs—the Reformation as a social movement and the Holy Roman Empire as dispersed governance—enable us to build a new, post-Rankean and postnational account of the German Reformation in the space created by the collapse of the confessional-national story." Brady, *Politics of the Reformation in Germany* (n. 13 above) 3.

Reformation breakthrough," and "the Luther cult."[44] But the retreat of confessional polemics and nationalist self-assertion is not to be confused with the advance of a convincing alternative to Hegel. As soon as one asks just what "it" is whose social, cultural, and popular dimensions we now understand to be so much more complex and diverse than once upon a time, the answer still remains "the Reformation." If one asks where and when "it" started, the answer still focuses on Germany after 1517. Studies continue to proliferate that can be readily identified as Catholic or Protestant in inclination, and for the most part German, French, Italian, Spanish, and British historians continue to write about the Reformation in splendid isolation from each other. Even historians particularly closely identified with advancing the social history of the Reformation rely on national boundaries to define their subject matter.[45] The question why there were no Francophone Anabaptists hardly attracts any more interest today than it did a quarter century ago.[46]

The result is best described, not as a radical break with the confessional and national narratives of the nineteenth century, but as an extension and perhaps a deepening of the confusion and "uncertainty we feel towards the Reformation and its historical outgrowths" that Bernd Moeller diagnosed some four decades ago.[47] It is all very well to replace "Renaissance and Reformation" with "late medieval" and "early modern" history and to insist that the Reformation was more complex and diverse than we used to believe. But stressing the complexity of what used to be a simple picture is not enough to abolish the hold of the traditional interpretation of the Reformation over historians' minds, and blurring the sharp chronological and confessional lines in the old picture is not the same as drawing a new picture. To the contrary, it hides the conceptual core that was forged for Reformation history in the nineteenth century and thereby aids in its survival. "Nowadays, the place of the old revolutionary shift from medieval to modern has been taken by a gradual, fluctuating,

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[44] "Applied to our field, it [romantic idealism] means the hegemony of theology over history in the form of the belief in the Reformation as the 'breakthrough' of an eternal 'Reformation principle,' rather than the appearance of new forms of European Christianity whose character and destinies need to be explained by historical causes. This I take to have been the fundamental idea of the Luther cult, whose ravages Professor Moeller himself has so ably described." Thomas A. Brady, Jr., "'The Social History of the Reformation' between 'Romantic Idealism' and 'Sociologism': A Reply," *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte der Reformation in England und Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang Mommsen, Peter Alter, and R. Scribner (Stuttgart 1979) 41.

[45] "If it is possible to summarize a movement as internationally and locally complex as the essays here have shown the Reformation to be, we must concede that diversity is a *leitmotif.* National context counted because it was exactly in the realm of local circumstances that the phenomenon of reformation was domesticated, made meaningful for people of different national, cultural or ethnic groups." Robert W. Scribner, "A Comparative Overview," *The Reformation in National Context*, ed. Robert W. Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge 1994) 225. Cf. R. W. Scribner, *The German Reformation* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1986).

[46] When it was asked by E. William Monter, "Reformation History and Social History," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 72 (1981) 6.

[47] "I suspect therefore that the neglect of the Reformation by secular historians and, as Ebeling noted, 'the forgetting of Luther … by today's educated man,' reflect the same underlying cause, the widespread and basic uncertainty we feel toward the Reformation and its historical outgrowths." Bernd Moeller, "Problems of Reformation Research," *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (n. 23 above) 4, with reference to Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: Einführung in sein Denken* (Tübingen 1964) 9. Secular historians no longer neglect the Reformation as Moeller thought they did when he wrote these words. But his diagnosis of the reason for their neglect of the Reformation applies equally well to the close attention they pay to the Reformation today.

highly contextualized blending of 'late medieval' with 'early modern,' the central phase of which unfolds in the fifteenth and sixteenth century," as the editors of a highly influential handbook of European history put it in the mid-1990s.[48] That sounds as though the traditional interpretation had finally been laid to rest. But the quotation marks around "late medieval" and "early modern" and the survival of "Renaissance and Reformation" in the title of the work tell a different story: the old concepts can no longer be accepted, but no new ones are on offer that could take their place.

Nowhere is this more poignantly evident than in the study of confessionalization. The confessionalization paradigm is explicitly intended to leave traditional views behind. In fact, however, it reproduces them under a different guise. According to one of its leading proponents, "confessionalization" supports three main theses.[49] First, by treating Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism under a single heading, it refuses to recognize Reformation and Counter-Reformation as opposed and chronologically distinct processes and focuses attention instead on the many parallels in the history, especially the social history, of Protestant and Catholic territories from the 1520s all the way to the early eighteenth century.[50] Second, it identifies confessionalization as the "methodical establishment of large new groups," and attributes its success to "1 a return to clear theoretical ideas; 2 the dissemination and establishment of new standards; 3 propaganda, and the taking of measures against counter-propaganda; 4 internalization of the new order through education and training; 5 the disciplining of adherents (in the narrower sense); 6 the practice of ritual; 7 the influencing of language."[51] And third, it highlights three crucial advantages the "emergent 'modern state'" derived from confessionalization for its development: "1 reinforcement of its national or territorial identity, both at home and abroad; 2 control over the church as a powerful rival of the new state power, and not least over church property as an important means of power; 3 discipline and homogenization of its subjects, for 'confessionalization' was the first phase of what Gerhard Oestreich has called the absolutist 'imposition of social discipline.'"[52]

This is an admirably clear account. But only one among its several features serves well to distinguish "confessionalization" from the history of Europe in the high Middle Ages. That feature is, of course, that the "large new groups" in question were marked by their identification with the very Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist confessions from whose differences the confessionalization paradigm is intended to abstract, as opposed to other kinds of large new groups that were methodically established in the Middle Ages, say, orthodox Latin Christians who accepted

[48] Brady, Oberman, and Tracy, eds., *Handbook of European History* (n. 28 above) 1.xvii.

[49] Reinhard, "Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung?" (n. 42 above) 257–277, trans. as "Pressures towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age," *The German Reformation* (n. 24 above) 169–192, at 173f. Reinhard's views, though by no means undisputed, are influential enough to be taken as representative. For an excellent précis of the entire issue see O'Malley, *Trent and All That* (n. 40 above) 108–115.

[50] Ernst Walter Zeeden was the first to stress these similarities, but spoke of "Konfessionsbildung" rather than "Konfessionalisierung" and largely stayed within the limits of church history; see his "Grundlagen und Wege der Konfessionsbildung in Deutschland im Zeitalter der Glaubenskämpfe," *Historische Zeitschrift* 185 (1958) 248–299, and *Die Entstehung der Konfessionen* (n. 42 above).

[51] Reinhard, "Pressures" (n. 49 above) 177–178.

[52] Ibid. 183.

transubstantiation, went to confession once a year, and bowed to the authority of the pope in Rome, the subjects of the king of Sicily, or the members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders. Everything else is perfectly familiar to medievalists. Gratian's *Decretum* and Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, not to mention Gregory VII's rebellion against the abuses that had undermined the purity of the church in the early middle ages, surely marked a return to clear theoretical ideas—just not Protestant ideas or the kind of return that Protestants would have approved. The assizes of Clarendon, the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, and the Constitutions of Melfi surely established new standards that were effectively disseminated—just not the standards established in the Augsburg Confession, the canons of the council of Trent, or the Book of Common Prayer. The wars of words conducted during the Investiture Controversy, by Guelfs and Ghibellines, and by the publicists of Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII were nothing if not propaganda and counter-propaganda. Students at medieval universities internalized the new order through education and training. Ritual was practiced: think of All Souls, Corpus Christi, and the cult of the Virgin Mary. Language was influenced: think of words like *Gewissen*, *Ablass*, crusade, bank, madam, sir, courtesy, adventure. There was no German word for "conscience" until *Gewissen* was invented by a medieval cleric. There is hardly any region in medieval Europe where national and territorial identities were not reinforced or created for the first time, not to mention the various conquests by which Ireland, most of Spain, Sicily, the Holy Land, Byzantium, Prussia, and other regions on the periphery of Europe and beyond were assimilated to European culture. Temporal rulers seized control of church property wherever they could, held on to benefices, used crusading tenths for their own purposes, or arrested an entire military order, as Philip IV did with the Templars in one of the most spectacular state operations in medieval history. As far as discipline and homogenization are concerned, those were well underway as soon as medieval monks from Cluny or Gorze imposed their ascetic ways of life upon a recalcitrant secular clergy, medieval knights learned to follow a chivalric code of conduct, and usurers began to practice restitution—not to mention Dominican inquisitors and people like the villagers of Montaillou, who knew at least as much about discipline as Menocchio, the miller made famous by Carlo Ginzburg.[53] In short, judging by the criteria proposed as markers of confessionalization, excepting only the co-existence of several different confessions itself, confessionalization proceeded apace in medieval Europe.

Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the conceptual underpinnings of "confessionalization" thus turn out to be what they were for *the* Reformation: confessional and German. If confessionalization were to be taken seriously as a social process involving Europe as a whole, rather than one rooted in the traditional interpretation of the Protestant Reformation in Germany and presupposing

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[53] For the general argument see R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250* (Oxford 1987); cf. Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford 1978); Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven 1984); Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia 1985); Benjamin N. Nelson, *The Idea of Usury: From Tribal Brotherhood to Universal Otherhood*, 2nd ed. (Chicago 1969); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York

confessional differences, the word "confession" would have to be removed from the name of the process in question, and the process itself could hardly be said to begin in the sixteenth century. It would have to be said to have already had a long history in 1297, when King Philip IV scored a signal victory over Pope Boniface VIII's attempts to protect the French clergy from royal pressure by closing the borders of his kingdom to the export of bullion to Italy.[54] It would be difficult not to see the papacy's government of central Italy in the thirteenth century as analogous to the control Saxon princes sought to impose on their domains in the sixteenth century.[55] Pride of place in the history of confessionalization would have to be given to legislative measures like the Statute of Provisors, the Statute of Praemunire, and the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges, by which the monarchs of England and France enhanced their control over the clergy and the religious lives of their subjects. The events of the sixteenth century would have to be characterized as the manner in which Germans tried to catch up with their Italian, French, and English neighbors' success in subjecting clerics to lay control, arriving late as usual on the historical scene, and all the more excited to get going. Why should the creation of new dioceses and archdioceses on the periphery of Carolingian Europe in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, such as Magdeburg, Prague, Gniezno, Gran, Lund, Uppsala, Catania, Aversa, Toledo, and Lisbon, not to mention the occupation of Greek churches by Latin crusaders in the Byzantine east, not be regarded as part and parcel of confessionalization?[56] Because the confession was that of Latin Christianity? Why should the shift of general councils from Rome to Lyon, the many popes who hailed from France once Urban IV (1261–1264) had set the precedent, and the move of the papacy to Avignon not be regarded as evidence for the dexterity with which the French monarchy almost managed to seize the largest jewel in the crown of confessionalization's pursuit of state control over the church?[57] According to the confessionalization paradigm itself the answer may not be, "because Avignon caused disagreement among medieval Christians, not among Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists, and Catholics," for that would presuppose the very theological distinctions the confessionalization paradigm is intended to supersede. But then what would the answer be? The periodization of confessionalization—contested, but never said to begin before the sixteenth century—tacitly presupposes Luther.[58] The

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1979); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore 1980).

[54] Joseph R. Strayer, *The Reign of Philip the Fair* (Princeton 1980); idem, "France: The Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King," *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of E. H. Harbison*, ed. T. K. Rabb and J. E. Seigel (Princeton 1969) 3–16.

[55] Peter Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (Berkeley 1972); cf. Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince. One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Susan Haskins (Cambridge 1987).

[56] See Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* (n. 5 above) 5–18.

[57] Oakley, *The Western Church* (n. 25 above) 32–38, pays special attention to the growing influence of France over the church since the first Council of Lyon in 1245. Revisionist historians may counter that neither Lyon nor Avignon were part of France, and that Pope Clement V was far from a spineless lackey of the French monarchy; cf. Sophia Menache, *Clement V* (Cambridge 1998). That is true; but it was already well known to Ewald Müller, *Das Konzil von Vienne, 1311–1312: Seine Quellen und seine Geschichte* (Münster 1934), and it is not the point. The point is that Clement V and his Avignonese successors had a harder time resisting French pressure than, say, Innocent III or Gregory IX.

[58] The tension between the pan-European perspective of a social historian and a traditionally inspired focus on the 16th c., accompanied by an equally traditional belief in the unity of medieval Christianity and the

confessionalization paradigm amounts to a contemporary version of Hegel's vision of the modern state, minus Hegel's fondness for the sincerity of the German people and his distaste for Catholic corruption, plus the gloomy descent of Weber's inner-worldly asceticism and Oestreich's social discipline on ordinary folk in lieu of Hegel's happy rise of liberty.[59]

   Small wonder that historians committed to the confessionalization paradigm find it difficult to decide whether it desacralized society, sacralized politics, or both.[60] Small wonder that historians committed to expelling *the* Reformation from the realm of re-spectable historical conversation find themselves compelled to readmit it through the backdoor, through which it enters in quotation marks, wearing humbler clothes and bearing a more modest demeanor, but otherwise unchanged.[61] The signs are every-where. Historians whom editorial responsibilities compel to rely on language accept-able to all are forced to stoop to the lowest common denominator by claiming that the Reformation was … important.[62] General histories explicitly intended to incorporate

importance of its destruction, is evident in Heinz Schilling, "The Reformation and the Rise of the Early Modern State," *Luther and the Modern State in Germany*, ed. James D. Tracy (Kirksville 1986) 21, 22: "This analysis will assume a broader than normal context, for Lutheranism and German state building will be set in a framework of confessionalization and state building as universal phenomena of early modern Europe. … The term 'confessionalization' thus designates the fragmentation of the unitary Christendom (*Christianitas Latina*) of the Middle Ages into at least three confessional churches—Lutheran, Calvinistic or 'Reformed,' and post-Tridentine Roman Catholic. Each formed a highly organized system, which tended to monopolize the world view with respect to the individual, the state, and society, and which laid down strictly formulated norms in politics and morals."

   [59] "Despite Reinhard and Schilling's desire some fifteen years later [i.e., than the publication of Moel-ler's work on imperial cities in 1962] to put confessionalization into the realm of social-history discourse, their focus was still on the two institutions traditional in German historiography, the church and the state—precisely 'the two very dry elements' that Febvre wanted historians to transcend." O'Malley, *Trent and All That* (n. 40 above) 110, with reference to Febvre, "The Origins of the French Reformation" (n. 18 above) 47.

   [60] "The most fundamental transformation in early modern Central Germany was the desacralization of society. By this I do not mean merely the secularization of social life, but an antithetical development to the process of sacralization in late medieval Germany." Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation* (n. 42 above) 183. "The new sacralization of politics, going hand in hand with confessionalization, meant a functional increase for the emergent modern state power. Theoretically and practically, the church became an integral part of the state, and in practice that was the case for the Catholic almost as much as for the evangelical church." Wolfgang Reinhard, "Pressures towards Confessionalization? Prolegomena to a Theory of the Confessional Age," *The German Reformation* (n. 24 above) 187.

   [61] "The Reformation began in Germany in the 1520s, with the 'Luther affair,' the controversy precipi-tated by Martin Luther's attack on indulgences and the indulgence trade in October 1517." Robert W. Scribner, "Introduction," *The Reformation in National Context* (n. 45 above) 1. "The ideological label 'the Reformation' has become too embedded as a description of a historical period for us to be able to dispense with it completely, but at least we can begin to mean by it a complex, extended historical process, going well beyond the endeavours of one man or one tendency, and involving social, political and wider religious issues." Scribner and Dixon, *The German Reformation* (n. 33 above) 5. "The shift forward of 'the turning point' to the eighteenth century has displaced the old pair, 'the Renaissance' and 'the Reformation,' as the double-sided hinge of European development, but it has by no means robbed the centuries from 1400 to 1600 altogether of a pivotal role. … 'The Reformation' still means the transformation and differentiation of western Christianity during the sixteenth century, but it can no longer stand for Motley's liberation of the world from priestcraft and superstition. Thus shorn of their former ideological freight, the concepts still retain distinct signatures as aspects of a world which was, at the same time, late medieval and early mod-ern." Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy, "Introduction: Renaissance and Ref-ormation, Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era," *Handbook of European History* (n. 28 above) 1.xxi.

   [62] "One theme has persisted, even in recent Reformation historiography: the Reformation was a major event in European history. Whether viewed negatively as a disaster for flourishing medieval Christianity, or positively as the incisively liberating birth of modernity, with its appeal to conscience, the scholarly bottom line has remained clear: the events of the sixteenth century were of major import." Hans J. Hillerbrand,

new scholarship on the Reformation combine it with conceptual claims about the uniqueness and liberating role of the Reformation that Hegel would have been proud to endorse.[63] Occasionally the underlying tensions break out into the open, dividing recent historians of the Reformation no less sharply from each other than confessional polemics used to do.[64] More conservative historians find it unnecessary to change their tune and may even gleefully insist that some of their intermittently disputed views have after all been proven right.[65] Theologically inclined historians have not only survived, but are flexing their muscles.[66] Historians who try to change the subject

"Preface," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, ed. Hans J. Hillerbrand, 4 vols. (New York 1996) 1.x.

[63] "By its original teaching and example, the Reformation, above all, encouraged people to resist religious tyranny; many scholars view it also as a major force for political freedom and social justice, at least before the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 worked to restrict its social promise. The Reformation was born of such resistance, and this has been its basic legacy." Ozment, *The Age of Reform* (n. 25 above) 437. "The Reformation, the movement which divided European Christianity into catholic and protestant traditions, is unique. No other movement of religious protest or reform since antiquity has been so widespread or lasting in its effects, so deep and searching in its criticism of received wisdom, so destructive in what it abolished or so fertile in what it created. … The unique quality of the protestant Reformation consists in that it took a single core idea; it presented that idea to everyone, and encouraged public discussion; it then deduced the rest of the changes to teaching and worship from that idea; and, finally, it tore down the entire fabric of the institutional Church and built again from scratch, including only what was consistent with, and required by, the basic religious message." Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford 1991) 1, 422.

[64] See the disagreement between Bernd Moeller, "Stadt und Buch: Bermerkungen zur Struktur der reformatorischen Bewegung in Deutschland," *Stadtbürgertum und Adel in der Reformation* (n. 44 above) 25–39; and Brady, "'The Social History of the Reformation'" (n. 44 above) 40–43.

[65] "The first edition of this volume was written between 1953 and 1956, and the more than three decades since that time have witnessed an exceptional outburst of new research and fresh interpretations. Thus it has unquestionably become desirable to offer to readers and students a revised version of the Reformation story. Perhaps the volume should have been replaced by a totally new one, but so drastic a step was neither feasible nor yet, as it turned out, necessary. … In the course of the operation it became apparent that the bulk of the volume has survived the accidents of ageing remarkably well. … As a matter of fact—such things will happen—the passage of time and labour has helped to justify some of the interpretations which in between appeared to be called in much doubt. … in the upshot it looks as though the major effects of this half-century [1520–1559] identified in the original (ch. 1 [of 1958]) still seem convincing. The end of the universal church, and the emergence of national states took their force from the backward-looking explosion touched off by Luther, and the age witnessed the unmistakable beginnings of European ascendancy over the habitable part of the globe." G. R. Elton, "Introduction to the 2nd Edition," *The Reformation, 1520–1559*, ed. G. R. Elton, 2nd ed. (Cambridge 1990) vii, ix–x.

[66] "Thus it is time to affirm once again, with due appreciation for historical contexts, that theological ideas matter, and that theology may be a motor for historical events, and not just driven by them. To think otherwise is an anachronistic 'Alice in Wonderland' view of the Reformation in which theology is only the linguistic cloak for the Reformers' 'real' motivations. Indeed, it was precisely theology that enabled the reform impulse effectively to cross social and political polarizations. … The modern academic ideal of bracketing personal commitment in order to provide comparative and alternative views for discussion or on the supposition that all is relative or that content is discovered through dialogue was alien to the minds of most of our examples. Equally alien was the modern apologetic effort to make the Christian faith 'plausible.'" Carter Lindberg, "Introduction," *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Oxford 2002) 2–3, 4. Cf. Berndt Hamm, Bernd Moeller, and Dorothea Wendebourg, *Reformationstheorien: Ein kirchenhistorischer Disput über Einheit und Vielfalt der Reformation* (Göttingen 1995); and Scott Hendrix, "Rerooting the Faith: The Coherence and Significance of the Reformation," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* n.s. 21 (2000) 63–80.

altogether are few and far between.[67] Fewer still are those who seek to do entirely without the concept "Reformation."[68]

In short, *the* Reformation is alive and well.[69] The scholarly efforts of the last half-century have produced many contenders for the throne upon which Hegel sat. The court in which he ruled is packed with rivals to the succession. But his throne is vacant. Where there ought to be a good conceptual alternative to the thesis that *the* Reformation made Man free, we meet with Hegel's ghost. All efforts to the contrary notwithstanding—and they are many, ingenious, well-documented, thorough, and rising to the most exacting standards of historical credibility—*the* Reformation is hanging on the neck of history like a vampire sucking the lifeblood from its veins without paying much attention to the most powerful exorcisms historians know how to perform. How come? What gives this concept its uncanny power to escape unscathed from the best weapons of critical historical examination?

MEDIEVAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

In order to give a plausible answer to this question, it is necessary to turn to medieval history, especially the period around the turn from the first to the second millennium. For that period has come to play a role in medieval history not unlike the role the Reformation used to play in marking the beginning of modern history.

If one had asked a historian in the nineteenth century about the most important things that happened in Europe between the beginning of the tenth century and the end of the eleventh century, the answer would typically have included a few major ingredients: the collapse of the Carolingian Empire; the development of feudal government; the restoration of the Empire by the Ottonians; the assertion of papal supremacy by Pope Gregory VII; and the consequent struggle for world domination pitting the papacy against the emperor.[70] In the wake of Niebuhr, Ranke, and the

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[67] Two such historians are Peter Blickle, *Obedient Germans? A Rebuttal: A New View of German History*, trans. Thomas A. Brady, Jr. (Charlottesville 1997); and Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire* (n. 41 above).

[68] John Bossy is one of them. He tries "to use it as sparingly as possible, not simply because it goes along too easily with the notion that a bad form of Christianity was being replaced by a good one, but because it sits awkwardly across the subject without directing one's attention anywhere in particular. Properly speaking, it is a term from the vocabulary of ecclesiastical discipline, and means the restoration of some ideal norm, by the action of superiors, of the conduct of institutions and persons. It may be a necessary concept in the history of the Church as an institution; but it does not seem much use in the history of Christianity, since it is too high-flown to cope with actual social behaviour, and not high-flown enough to deal sensitively with thought, feeling, or culture." Bossy, *Christianity in the West* (n. 26 above) 91. Cf. idem, "The German Reformation after Moeller," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994) 673–684.

[69] "It would not be accurate to say, as some do, that Renaissance and Reformation studies have given way to a field called early modern European history. Although, as I shall say further on, colleagues have increasingly diverse interests, the Reformation as a movement to rectify perceived wrongs within the Catholic Church and within the religious and cultural life of the people is still itself a subject of energetic investigation; the Reformation has by no means faded from the historical scene." Karant-Nunn, "Changing One's Mind" (n. 24 above) 1102.

[70] There is an abundance of literature on individual 19th-c. historians and on 19th-c. historiography in general, but I know of no good study of 19th-c. medieval historiography as such. Surveys such as Herbert Butterfield, *Man on his Past: The Study of the History of Historical Scholarship* (Cambridge 1955) 62–141; Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 2nd ed. (Chicago 1994) 228–302; G. P. Gooch, *History and Historians in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston 1959) 39–213; Georg G. Iggers, *New Directions in European Historiography*, rev. ed. (Middletown, CT 1984) 3–42; and Donald R. Kelley, *Fortunes of History: Historical Inquiry from Herder to Huizinga* (New Haven 2003), do not go very far. Eduard

founding of the Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde and the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* by Karl vom Stein in 1819, historians like Georg Waitz, Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, Heinrich von Sybel, and Julius Ficker set the standard for medieval history. What mattered to them and their successors—from Heinrich Brunner, Otto von Gierke, Ulrich Stutz, and Karl Hampe down to Fritz Kern, Heinrich Mitteis, and Geoffrey Barraclough—were the history of the nation, the constitution of the state, and the fate of the empire.[71]

There was of course much room for disagreement. Some historians regarded the identification of Germany with the Holy Roman Empire as an unmitigated disaster for the history of the German people, while others viewed it as a hallowed cause that gave Germans a glorious role to play in European history. Some viewed the ascent of the papacy as a perversion of Christianity, others as a crowning achievement in the struggle to bring salvation to mankind. The origins of feudalism were variously sought in the disintegration of monarchical government and Germanic forms of loyalty. Hegelians disagreed with Rankeans, liberal historians in Göttingen with nationalist historians in Berlin, and Catholic historians with Protestants. But most of them would have been united in the conviction that the first duty of historians of medieval Europe was to study the nation, the constitution, and the state—and to publish critical editions of the sources shedding light on that history.[72] Not for nothing the *Monumenta Germaniae*

Fueter, *Geschichte der neueren Historiographie* (München 1911) is still the most detailed. Michael Bentley, ed., *Companion to Historiography* (London and New York 1997) 105–246, "Part II: The Medieval World," is almost entirely limited to recent scholarship. Given the leading role by German medievalists and the MGH, one is better informed by studies like Horst Fuhrmann, *"Sind eben alles Menschen gewesen": Gelehrtenleben im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, dargestellt am Beispiel der Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (München 1996); and Alexander Deisenroth, *Deutsches Mittelalter und deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft im 19. Jahrhundert: Irrationalität und politisches Interesse in der deutschen Mediävistik zwischen aufgeklärtem Absolutismus und erstem Weltkrieg* (Rheinfelden 1985); or by consulting pieces like "German Schools of History," the article with which Lord Acton led off the first volume of the *English Historical Review* 1 (1886) 7–42; Acton's obituary on Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, *English Historical Review* 5 (1890) 306–310; F. M. Powicke, "Presidential Address: Reflections on the Medieval State," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 4th ser., 19 (1936) 1–18; Carl Stephenson, "The Origin and Significance of Feudalism," *The American Historical Review* 46 (1941) 788–812; Walter Ullmann, "Reflections on the Medieval Empire," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th ser., 14 (1964) 89–108; and two nicely complementary articles published almost simultaneously by two very different medievalists, namely, Norman F. Cantor, "Medieval Historiography as Modern Political and Social Thought," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3 (1968) 55–73; and Knowles's superb "Some Trends in Scholarship" (n. 28 above) 139–157.

[71] Georg Waitz, *Deutsche Verfassungsgeschichte*, 8 vols. (Kiel 1844); Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, *Geschichte der deutschen Kaiserzeit*, 6 vols. (Leipzig 1877); Friedrich Schneider, *Universalstaat oder Nationalstaat: Macht und Ende des Ersten deutschen Reiches. Die Streitschriften von Heinrich v. Sybel und Julius Ficker zur deutschen Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters* (Innsbruck 1941); Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1887); Otto Friedrich v. Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, 4 vols. (Berlin 1868–1913); Ulrich Stutz, *Geschichte des kirchlichen Benefizialwesens von seinen Anfängen bis auf die Zeit Alexanders III* (Berlin 1895); Karl Hampe, *Deutsche Kaisergeschichte in der Zeit der Salier und Staufer* (Leipzig 1909); Fritz Kern, *Gottesgnadentum und Widerstandsrecht im früheren Mittelalter: Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Monarchie* (Leipzig 1914); Heinrich Mitteis, *Lehnrecht und Staatsgewalt: Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Weimar 1933). Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany*, rev. ed. (Oxford 1947), can be viewed as one of the last offshoots of this line of work.

[72] For a quick introduction to the mindset of the leading German historians at the time one can hardly do better than to read Heinrich von Sybel's "Vorwort" and the programmatic statements "Zur Charakteristik der heutigen Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland" by Wilhelm Giesebrecht, Georg Waitz, Leopold Ranke, Georg Heinrich Pertz, and Gustav Droysen in the first volume of the *Historische Zeitschrift* 1 (1859) iii–v, 1–42.

Historica features the sacred love of the fatherland in its motto, "Sanctus amor patriae dat animum."

Under those circumstances the tenth and eleventh centuries could not but look more or less diametrically opposed to the Reformation. In the high Middle Ages, political power was dispersed to the feudal aristocracy; in the Reformation, centralizing monarchs were seizing political and military power from the aristocracy. In the high Middle Ages, the most important battle pitted the Empire against the papacy; in the Reformation, the most important battle pitted the Habsburgs against the Valois. In the high Middle Ages, medieval Christendom was spiritually united under the papacy; in the Reformation Christendom was divided into Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist confessions. In the high Middle Ages the European knighthood went on crusade to recover the Holy Land; in the Reformation, knights were fast losing their allure and the Ottomans were advancing up the Balkans to lay siege to Vienna. Catholic and Protestant historians disagreed whether the Reformation was a good thing. But they were unanimous that it overturned the state of affairs that had obtained in the high Middle Ages.

Here, too, Hegel holds a conceptual key to the traditional perspective. The way he saw it, the high medieval opposition between a theocratic church and a feudal state marked the height of the antithesis between internal and external spirit in the history of the Germanic world. That antithesis, he was convinced, caused both the disintegration of the medieval empire and the corruption of the medieval church. It was not going to be overcome until all superficial efforts at reforming mere abuses had failed, until the wholesale corruption of both church and state had become indisputable, and the entire feudal system was torn up by the Reformation root and branch. The Reformation blazed a trail for a new synthesis of internal spirit with external spirit that would culminate in the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Prussian state. Because the Reformation overcame the antithesis between internal and external spirit that had characterized the high Middle Ages, the Reformation could itself be viewed as the historical antithesis to the high medieval thesis.[73] Hegel's views, of course, were hardly undisputed. But they do point to the conceptual links that tied the nineteenth-century understanding of high medieval Europe to the nineteenth-century understanding of the Reformation.

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[73] "The *second period* [of the Germanic World] develops the two sides of the antithesis to a logically consequential independence and opposition—the Church for itself as a *Theocracy*, and the State for itself as a *Feudal Monarchy*. Charlemagne had formed an alliance with the Holy See against the Lombards and the factions of the nobles in Rome. A union thus arose between the spiritual and the secular power, and a kingdom of heaven on earth promised to follow in the wake of this conciliation. But just at this time, instead of a spiritual kingdom of heaven, the inwardness of the Christian principle wears the appearance of being altogether directed outwards and leaving its proper sphere. Christian Freedom is perverted to its very opposite, both in a religious and secular respect; on the one hand to the severest bondage, on the other hand to the most immoral excess—a barbarous intensity of every passion. In this period two aspects of society are to be especially noticed: the first is the formation of states—superior and inferior suzerainties exhibiting a regulated subordination, so that every relation becomes a firmly-fixed private right, excluding a sense of universality. This regulated subordination appears in the *Feudal System*. The second aspect presents the antithesis of *Church and State*. This antithesis exists solely because the Church, to whose management the Spiritual was committed, itself sinks down into every kind of worldliness—a worldliness which appears only the more detestable, because all passions assume the sanction of religion. The time of Charles V's reign—i.e., the first half of the sixteenth century, forms the end of the second, and likewise the beginning of the *third period*." Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (n. 12 above) 344.

Much has changed since then.[74] No respectable historian today would identify himself or herself with constitutional monarchy, nationalism, and Protestantism as freely as Heinrich von Sybel did in his editorial preface to the first volume of the *Historische Zeitschrift* by banishing "feudalism," "radicalism," and "ultramontanism" from the realm of civilized historical discourse to which his journal was supposed to be devoted.[75] Where German historians used to be dominant, French, English, and American historians now hold much of the field. Where the scrupulous preparation of critical editions of previously unpublished sources used to command the highest honors in the profession, the honor now goes to historians who struggle most successfully with the complexities of historical interpretation. Late in the nineteenth century Karl Lamprecht was ruthlessly put down for daring to question the traditional focus on constitutional and political history.[76] Since then social and economic historians have turned the tables on Lamprecht's intellectual opponents. Henri Pirenne blazed a trail by unsettling the traditional periodization of medieval history and drawing attention to the economic role of towns in the high medieval transformation of European economy and society.[77] With the founding of the *Annales* in 1929 Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre broke the pattern established by the foundation of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* a century before not just for medieval, but for all of history. Bloch's work on medieval agriculture and feudal society developed a picture of medieval society that nineteenth-century historians of states and constitutions had not been able to imagine.[78] After World War II there followed a great outburst of

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[74] Reliable information about 20th-c. medieval historiography is easier to find than is the case for the 19th c., in part because the prominent role of the *Annales* school helps to focus historiographical attention where it counts. See Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York 1991), reckless, but necessary reading; James Powell, ed., *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse 1992); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore 1997); Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages" (n. 41 above) 519–552; Paul Freedman and Gabrielle Spiegel, "Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998) 677–704; Otto Gerhard Oexle, *Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts: Mit Beiträgen von Arnold Esch, Johannes Fried und Patrick J. Geary* (Göttingen 1996); Hans-Werner Goetz, *Moderne Mediävistik: Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung* (Darmstadt 1999). Also useful are the essays in Bentley, ed., *Companion to Historiography* (n. 70 above) 105–246, "Part II: The Medieval World." On the *Annales* see Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–1989* (Stanford 1990); Michael Erbe, *Zur neueren französischen Sozialgeschichtsforschung: Die Gruppe um die Annales* (Darmstadt 1979); and Bryce Lyon, "Henri Pirenne and the Origins of *Annales* History," *Annals of Scholarship* 1 (1980) 69–84.

[75] "Diese Auffassung schliesst den Feudalismus aus, welcher dem fortschreitenden Leben abgestorbene Elemente aufnöthigt, den Radicalismus, welcher die subjective Willkür an die Stelle des organischen Verlaufs setzt, den Ultramontanismus, welcher die nationale und geistige Entwicklung der Autorität einer äussern Kirche unterwirft." Heinrich von Sybel, "Vorwort," *Historische Zeitschrift* 1 (1859) iii. For Georg Waitz's agreement with Sybel see the same volume, pp. 20, 26.

[76] Karl Lamprecht, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 14 vols. (Berlin 1891); Roger Chickering, *Karl Lamprecht: A German Academic Life (1856–1915)* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ 1993).

[77] Henri Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, ed. Jacques Pirenne (Paris 1937); Paul Egon Hübinger, ed., *Bedeutung und Rolle des Islam beim Übergang vom Altertum zum Mittelalter* (Darmstadt 1968); Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse, *Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe: Archaeology and the Pirenne Thesis* (Ithaca 1983); Henri Pirenne, *Medieval Cities: Their Origins and the Revival of Trade*, trans. Frank D. Halsey (Princeton 1925); Henri Pirenne, *Early Democracies in the Low Countries: Urban Society and Political Conflict in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, trans. J. V. Saunders (New York 1971); Bryce Dale Lyon, *Henri Pirenne: A Biographical and Intellectual Study* (Ghent 1974).

[78] Bloch, *Feudal Society* (n. 6 above); Marc Bloch, *French Rural History: An Essay on its Basic Characteristics*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (Berkeley 1966).

scholarly creativity by Bloch's and Febvre's followers in France and elsewhere that enormously expanded the territory of historical investigation.[79] More recently historians like Caroline Bynum and John Boswell have turned historians' attention to questions of gender, sexuality, and the body.[80] Questions of method continue to proliferate and change proceeds apace.

Not that historians have forgotten the empire, the nation, the state, or the church. But politics and ideas no longer dominate the understanding of high medieval history as they once used to do, and even where they occupy the center of attention, they have taken on a very different hue. Bloch's own early work *The Royal Touch* focused on monarchy, but viewed it from an anthropological perspective.[81] Percy Ernst Schramm and Ernst Kantorowicz fused the study of monarchy and the state with that of religion and liturgy.[82] Gerd Tellenbach transformed the Investiture Controversy from a papal seizure of temporal power into a revolutionary struggle over the right order of the world in which the church at last succeeded in achieving liberty from the tutelage to secular powers to which it had been condemned since early medieval times.[83] Herbert Grundmann focused on medieval religion beyond the institutions of the church.[84] Otto Hintze examined feudalism from a world historical perspective as a precondition for modern representative government, while Theodor Mayer and Otto Brunner redefined the study of the medieval state as a kind of social history.[85] Charles Homer Haskins found a Renaissance in the twelfth century, long before the Italian revival of antiquity that commonly goes under that name, and Giles Constable found a Reformation in the

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[79] E.g., Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago 1980); Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York 1983); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The Peasants of Languedoc*, trans. with intro. by John Day (Urbana 1974); Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou* (n. 53 above); Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago 1984); David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA 1985).

[80] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York 1996); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago 1980); Nancy Partner, Judith M. Bennett, Madeline H. Caviness, et al., "Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism," *Speculum* 68 (1993) 305–471; Janet L. Nelson, "Family, Gender, and Sexuality in the Middle Ages," *Companion to Historiography*, ed. Bentley (n. 70 above) 153–176.

[81] Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London 1973).

[82] Percy Ernst Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio: Studien zur Geschichte des römischen Erneuerungsgedankens vom Ende des karolingischen Reiches bis zum Investiturstreit*, 2 vols. (Leipzig 1929); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton 1957).

[83] Gerd Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Controversy*, trans. Ralph F. Bennett (London 1959).

[84] Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links Between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, trans. Steven Rowan (Notre Dame 1995).

[85] Otto Hintze, "The Preconditions of Representative Government in the Context of World History," *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, ed. Felix Gilbert (New York 1975) 302–353; Theodor Mayer, "Die Ausbildung der Grundlagen des modernen deutschen Staates im hohen Mittelalter," *Historische Zeitschrift* 159 (1938–1939) 457–487; Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. with intro. by Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia 1992).

same century.[86] Joseph Strayer saw the makings of modern states in thirteenth-century France and England.[87] Brian Tierney traced the roots of natural rights and democratic thought to the work of twelfth-century canon lawyers.[88] The study of ideas has been entirely transformed in method and subject matter.[89] Wherever you look the turn to social history has laid the nineteenth-century view of medieval history to rest.

If one were to ask a historian today about the most important changes that happened in Europe between the beginning of the tenth century and the end of the eleventh century, a typical answer would therefore be quite different from what it would have been a hundred years ago. It would have to include the resumption of population growth after the long decline that set in during late antiquity, the revival of the economy and trade, the establishment of a society of peasants governed by priests, knights, and townsmen, the creation of an urban European culture, either on the foundations of ancient urbanism laid in those parts of Europe that had been included in the Roman Empire, or by the founding of new cities in Europe east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, and the expansion of Europe beyond its Carolingian borders. "Feudal anarchy" has long since disappeared and more recently feudalism itself seems to have disintegrated under the withering impact of close scholarly scrutiny.[90] A good way to characterize the high Middle Ages now is to refer to them as *The Making of the Middle Ages*, *The Making of Europe*, or *The First European Revolution*, to quote the titles of three different, but complementary books each of which views the period in question as a decisive transformation in the history of European society as a whole.[91] Historians of course continue to disagree. How exactly is the "first European Revolution" to be dated, and what, if anything, made it a revolution?[92] When exactly did population growth resume? Can one really do without the concept of feudalism? Just how did the relations between men and women change? Debates about such questions will continue. But one fundamental point is certain: the high Middle Ages can no longer be regarded as the antithesis of the Reformation.

The turn from "constitutional" to social history thus has removed the central justification for the traditional understanding of the relationship between the Reformation and the Middle Ages. But neither medievalists nor early modernists have so far quite

[86] Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA 1927); Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (n. 11 above); cf. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable, eds., *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA 1982).

[87] Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton 1970); Strayer, *Reign of Philip the Fair* (n. 54 above).

[88] Tierney, *Religion, Law* (n. 27 above); Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights* (n. 27 above).

[89] Murray, *Reason and Society* (n. 53 above); Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1993); Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge 1990).

[90] Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *American Historical Review* 79 (1974) 1063–1088; Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (New York and Oxford 1994).

[91] Southern, *Making of the Middle Ages* (n. 6 above); Bartlett, *The Making of Europe* (n. 5 above); Moore, *First European Revolution* (n. 5 above).

[92] See, for example, Guy Bois, *La mutation de l'an mil: Lournand, village mâconnais de l'Antiquité au féodalisme* (Paris 1989); Thomas N. Bisson, "The Feudal Revolution," *Past and Present* 142 (1994) 6–42; Dominique Barthélemy and Stephen D. White, "Debate: The Feudal Revolution," *Past and Present* 152 (1996) 196–223; and Timothy Reuter, Chris Wickham, and Thomas N. Bisson, "Debate: The Feudal Revolution," *Past and Present* 155 (1997) 177–225; Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," *Speculum* 75 (2000) 97–145.

appreciated the implications of this straightforward fact. They now have less respect for the religious and political changes brought by Renaissance and Reformation, and more for the reorganization of European society around the turn of the millennium, right in the middle of what once used to be regarded as an unbroken continuum of a thousand years of medieval history.[93] But they seem not yet to have noticed that the turn to social history has raised a far more basic question about the relationship between the Reformation and the Middle Ages than can be answered by digging into the social history of late medieval Europe or by substituting "early modern" for "Renaissance and Reformation." Since it is no longer plausible to view the Reformation as the antithesis of the high Middle Ages, does that perhaps allow us to locate its beginnings in the very developments to which it was ostensibly opposed? Might it not be the case that the Reformation stands in direct continuity to the "first European revolution"— that Martin Luther was the true heir of Pope Gregory VII?

A CONJECTURAL HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION

A history of the Reformation that begins in the eleventh century does not exist. There are of course historians who begin their histories around the year 1000 and continue further than the Reformation. Good examples come from social and economic history, as well as world historians, whose distant perch makes them more sympathetic to the concept of a "first European revolution" and less likely to become embroiled in Reformation controversies.[94] Legal historians seem specially inclined to share that point of view.[95] A few unusual people have made creative, not to say idiosyncratic, attempts to grasp the history of European civilization since the eleventh century as a whole.[96]

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[93] As Knowles put it almost forty years ago, at the same time when the social history of the Reformation was really taking off, "This insistence on movement and change is perhaps the greatest single revolution in medieval historiography. Even now, in some educated non-historical circles, medieval is still used as an umbrella-word, usually in a pejorative sense, indiscriminately of any action or theory in existence between 500 and 1500 A.D., and sixty years ago a global view of this kind was common even in popular historical writings. Today it is universally accepted not only that thought and institutions were never wholly static, least of all after 1000, but also that the movement of ideas and behaviour was not always from the barbarous to the civilized and from the uncouth to the beautiful." Knowles, "Some Trends in Scholarship" (n. 28 above) 149.

[94] Carlo M. Cipolla, *Before the Industrial Revolution: European Society and Economy, 1000–1700*, 3rd ed. (London 1993); Dietrich Gerhard, *Old Europe: A Study of Continuity, 1000–1800* (New York 1981). For a compatible periodization, but seen from the angle of antiquity or in the rearview mirror of modernity, see Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, 200–1000 A.D.*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 2003); Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte: Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin 1994); Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost Further Explored: England before the Industrial Age*, 3rd ed. (New York 1984); Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton 1978). For world historians, see William McNeill, *The Shape of European History* (New York 1974); J. M. Roberts, *The Penguin History of the World* (Harmondsworth 1990) 458–488; cf. Jerry H. Bentley and Patrick Manning, "AHR Forum: Periodization in World History," *American Historical Review* 101 (1996) 749–782.

[95] Manlio Bellomo, *The Common Legal Past of Europe, 1000–1800*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Washington, DC 1995); Franz Wieacker, *History of Private Law in Europe with Particular Reference to Germany*, trans. Tony Weir (New York 1995); Tierney, *Religion, Law* (n. 27 above); Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA 1983); Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution II: The Impact of the Protestant Reformations on the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA 2004).

[96] Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (London 1938); Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (n. 7 above); Friedrich Heer, *Aufgang Europas: Eine Studie zu den Zusammenhängen zwischen politischer Religiosität, Frömmigkeitsstil und dem Werden Europas im 12. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Wien 1949).

And there are countless textbooks that purport to treat the entire history of Western Civilization or one of its dimensions, especially the history of ideas, from a coherent point of view.[97] But none of them treat the Reformation as an extension of developments beginning around the turn of the Millennium. Even the most widely admired works of the greatest historians in the *Annales* tradition reproduce the divide between medieval and modern history with a surprising clarity.[98]

Where no such history exists, it can only be conjectured. The most effective way for doing so would seem to be to draw on the concepts that anthropologists, social scientists, and world historians have developed to distinguish the great agrarian civilizations from the two other main forms of society that human beings are known to have created: the so-called primitive societies of hunters and gatherers that were the norm throughout the Paleolithic and only very few of which survive, in much attenuated forms, in a few corners of the world; and the intensely urbanized societies of the modern industrial world with their unprecedented technologies and population size.[99]

Ernest Gellner has applied those concepts with brilliance and concision.[100] In the typical large-scale agro-literate society there is, on the one hand, a vast majority of the population—usually well over ninety percent—that is spread over the whole area under cultivation but subdivided into relatively small and well-defined groups of villagers or "peasants." These are the agricultural producers. They owe their livelihood to agriculture; they have no say in politics; and they are relatively clearly separated from each other, not so much by geographic distance or difficulties of transportation as by habits, customs, usages, dialects, languages, and other markers of cultural difference that vary significantly from one place to another and give each of these relatively little groups their own uniquely local style of life.[101]

On the other hand, there is an elite. The elite is normally divided into two or three main groups that correspond to the main instruments of power: the sword, the book, and money. These groups tend to be arranged in relationships of hierarchical subordination that divide them as sharply from each other as from the mass of the population as a whole: a military aristocracy equipped with weapons and well trained in the arts of war; a literate clerisy that knows how to read, write, and keep records; and merchants and traders who know how to draw power from commercial and monetary

[97] E.g., William H. McNeill, *History of Western Civilization: A Handbook*, 6th ed. (Chicago 1986); Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Europe, 400–1500*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Malden, MA 2005); Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (London 1947); and Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA 1936).

[98] Bloch, *Feudal Society* (n. 6 above), stayed on this side of the divide; Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. Beatrice Gottlieb (Cambridge, MA 1982); and Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Siân Reynolds, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York 1975) stayed on the other.

[99] See V. Gordon Childe, *Man Makes Himself* (London 1937); and Patricia Crone, *Pre-Industrial Societies* (Oxford and New York 1989), on agrarian societies and the Neolithic Revolution. Nomads are a special case; see Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, trans. Julia Crookenden, 2nd ed. (Madison 1994).

[100] Gellner, *Plough, Sword and Book* (n. 5 above); cf. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, New Perspectives on the Past (Ithaca 1983).

[101] Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou* (n. 53 above), offers a famously vivid account of such a community in medieval Europe; cf. Werner Rösener, *The Peasantry of Europe: From the Sixth Century to the Present*, trans. Thomas M. Barker (Oxford 1994).

forms of exchange. The elite makes up only a small part of the total population—somewhere near five or ten percent at most—but, barring sporadic disturbances, scandals, crises, rebellions, the decline of old families, the rise of new families, and the occasional collapse of whole societies, it exercises firm control over the rest, has more or less the same customs everywhere, speaks more or less the same language wherever it is encountered, and thus displays a cultural cohesion across the entire space it dominates sharply contrasting with the cultural variety characteristic amidst the subject population.

Thus there are on the one hand countless small settlements dotting a countryside whose inhabitants lead roughly the same kind of rural life, but who will feel like strangers as soon as they venture beyond the limits of their homes for more than a handful of miles (what Gellner called "laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers"), and on the other hand knights, monks, and merchants (Gellner's "stratified, horizontally segregated layers of military, administrative, clerical and sometimes commercial ruling class") who conduct themselves in ways that differ both from each other and from those of the agricultural producers, but who are linked to all other members of their social kind across the whole extent of their society, each by the ties in which they specialize: marriage, dynasty, control over land, and military competition for the aristocracy; letters, symbols, books, and sacred rites for the clerisy; and commerce, industry, and money for merchants and traders.[102] They do not only have much more in common with each other than with the mass of the population, and therefore understand each other better than the rest (on whom they often look down with noble, ecclesiastical, or bourgeois contempt), but they also encounter little trouble in exercising their specific function—war, sacred rites, and trade—in the same way wherever they may go. They can travel far and wide without feeling like strangers; their peers will understand them everywhere; and they are not (yet) divided from each other by the political and cultural boundaries surrounding modern states.

The energy that fueled the development of Europe within this frame was owed to the rural population. They literally cultivated Europe. But their society was shaped by the competition over wealth and power in which the nobility, the clerisy, and the merchants were constantly engaged.[103] These three competitors concluded a kind of tacit social contract—never articulated in those terms, but for that very reason more effective in reality than social contracts imagined by early modern theorists—according to which the exercise of power was divided into three clearly demarcated spheres. That yielded untold benefits to each because it gave all of them the right and liberty to expand their power within their special sphere of action as they saw fit, and at the same time protected them from each other. It was a straightforward way of dividing the spoils of power.[104]

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[102] See the diagram of "the general form of the social structure of agrarian societies" in Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (n. 100 above) 9; cf. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (n. 5 above) 188–198.

[103] Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (n. 19 above), is excellent on competition among the military aristocracy, but says very little about competition among the clergy (between secular and regular clergy) or merchants and traders (between patricians and artisans). On that subject see Murray, *Reason and Society* (n. 53 above).

[104] As John Mundy put it, "From the days of the Gregorians until the turmoil of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Europe was led by an inadvertent but real alliance between the rural and urban well-to-do and the churchmen under the See of Peter." Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (n. 6 above) 13.

In order to guarantee that the agreement would be kept, each offered a pledge: the clerisy gave up the right to progeny; the aristocracy gave up the right to lands held by the clerisy; and the merchants gave up the right to usury. In return the aristocracy received the support of the clerisy in its adoption of primogeniture and the concentration of power over Europe's real estate in the hands of an increasingly well-defined set of dynastic families with European standing that were closely related to each other by ties of blood and marriage; the church received the support of the aristocracy in holding most of the remaining real estate in mortmain and taking the leading cultural, legal, and symbolic role in Europe; and merchants were given the right to carry out their trade for profit without having their reputations ruined, and to travel to fairs and markets without having their business disturbed by military raiders.

Naturally these terms were often violated. Knights did use violence against clerics and merchants; clerics did traffic in temporal power; and merchants did buy absolution. Such violations make for some of the most exciting reading in the early history of Europe. But they are exciting only because they were scandalous exceptions from the norm. Like all scandals they distract from the substance of what was going on. The substance consisted of competition of knights with other knights, of clerics with other clerics, and of merchants with other merchants, while peasants were tilling the land for all. Compared to the intensity of the competition that characterized relations within each of the leading orders, relations between them looked like peace itself.[105]

This competition shaped political, ecclesiastical, and economic affairs. It went through three major phases. It began with the enormously creative and enthusiastic development of new institutions in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, at a time when the members of each group saw countless opportunities for making their fortunes in their own particular sphere of activity without having to step on the toes of their co-competitors in one of the other groups. One may call this the happy time of medieval history, when there was endless room for making plans and changing the world: the time of building cathedrals, creating canon law, founding cities, settling new lands, going on crusade, and so on. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the competition entered a phase of bitter social strife in which each group was split into factions disputing each other's right to what appeared to be increasingly scarce resources, when opportunities were dwindling and the world proved recalcitrant to change. Increasingly the factions failed to keep the peace; increasingly they looked for allies in

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[105] As Strayer, *Reign of Philip the Fair* (n. 54 above) 237f., 249–281, has shown particularly strikingly for the relationship between the king of France and the papacy; cf. Fasolt, *Council and Hierarchy* (n. 2 above) 55–56, 80–83, 101–111, 287–290. For an articulate statement of the general argument see Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (n. 6 above) 13–18, 24, 34–36, 199–233, 355–370. The same basic point was already well documented by Hashagen, *Staat und Kirche* (n. 22 above). Competition among knights and burghers is widely known but, misled by stereotypes about the unity of medieval Christendom, modern historians have never recognized the fierce battle between the regular and secular clergy as a threat to the unity of medieval Christianity no less potent than the later battles between Protestants and Catholics; see Kurt Schleyer, *Anfänge des Gallikanismus im 13. Jahrhundert* (Berlin 1937); Yves M.-J. Congar, "Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre mendiants et séculiers dans la seconde moitié du XIIIe siècle et le début du XIVe," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age* 36 (1961) 35–151; Brian Tierney, *Origins of Papal Infallibility, 1150–1350: A Study on the Concepts of Infallibility, Sovereignty and Tradition in the Middle Ages* (Leiden 1972). It is worth recalling that the indulgence controversy began when an Austin friar (Martin Luther) locked horns with a Dominican friar (Johannes Tetzel) allied to a secular cleric (Albrecht of Brandenburg, archbishop of Magdeburg and Mainz).

one of the other orders to gain the upper hand over the other faction; increasingly the social contract was at risk. This is the unhappy time of medieval history: the time of patricians fighting with artisans for urban power; of knights feeling the heels of princes on their necks and objecting to the arrival of thoroughly ignoble mercenaries on the scene; of priests and bishops fighting with monks and friars for the support of the papacy; and not least the time of famine, the Black Death, the Hundred Years War, the Great Schism, and peasant unrest. It ended in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the appearance of monopolists of power who managed to extricate themselves from the constraints of competition, to rise above their social peers for good, and thus to introduce new rules to the entire game. Great Italian dynasties who put an end to late medieval social strife by forcing their fellow citizens and neighboring cities under their own tyrannical control, like the Este in Modena and Ferrara, the Visconti and Sforza in Milan, and the Medici in Florence; the kings of England, France, and Spain, who learned how to subdue their aristocratic peers by means of standing armies and taxation once the great crisis of the Hundred Years War had passed, the Wars of the Roses were over, and the Reconquest of Spain was complete; and not least the pope, who, just as soon as the Great Schism was resolved and the Council of Basel had petered out, asserted the power of his monarchy over bishops and monastic orders, gave it a modern shape at the Council of Trent, and thus transformed himself into a sovereign prince quite different from anything that Gregory VII or Innocent III would have been able to envision—all of these document the grand theme of late medieval and early modern European history: the turn from oligarchic competition by estates to monarchical monopoly.[106]

The appearance of monarchical monopolists shook the social and cultural frame in which the development of Europe had so far taken place to an extent that had not been witnessed since the First European Revolution. Their methods were by no means new. They relied on military force, commercial wealth, and the same capacity to keep records, devise and raise taxes, and manipulate laws that had been pioneered by their high medieval predecessors. But they intensified those methods to a point where they could turn them to new uses. On the one hand, they put an end to the kind of competition that had hitherto confined their attention to the limits of their own social sphere. By turning peers into subjects, they shook off the most irksome constraints imposed on them by their social competitors and gained the ability to move with unprecedented liberty of action. That liberty is visible in all the diplomatic, military, commercial, and spiritual upheavals of early modern times. On the other hand, each of the new monopolists had more in common with every other member of his set than with their subjects or with whatever allies they had formerly found in social strata other than their own (such as the nobility had found among the bishops, or the friars among the merchants). Though they arose from different layers of society, they entertained the same desire to achieve sovereign control over their lands, to codify the criminal and civil laws with which to rule their subjects, and to devise international laws with which to

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[106] The most lucid account of "the monopoly mechanism" known to me is the second chapter ("On the Sociogenesis of the State") in the second volume ("State Formation and Civilization") of Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (n. 19 above) 335–439. For a classic characterization of the same process from the perspective of an *Annales* historian see the account of "towns, witness to the century" in Braudel, *Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World* (n. 98 above) 1.325–352.

regulate war and peace with other sovereign rulers. They shared a common interest in staking out their own domains by drawing new boundaries, cutting vertically, as it were, through a single cultural space, slicing it into the territorial pieces we call states, and flattening the horizontal layers of which society had so far been composed. Not least, they had the same desire to take the cultural lead from the church in order to be able to keep the clergy under their own control.

As a result the tacit social contract that clerics, knights, and merchants had made with each other in the tenth and eleventh centuries was replaced by a new social contract, equally tacit, between the monopolists who had escaped from the old terms. They agreed to divide the spoils of the Roman Church between them, support each other's right to exercise sovereign power over their subjects—over noblemen, clerics, and merchants alike, without distinction or respect of social rank and order—and renounce the right to interfere without good cause in territories ruled by other members of their set. The boundaries that had hitherto divided aristocracy, clergy, and merchants from each other, and all of them from peasants, were not simply abolished. But they lost their significance to novel boundaries that divided Europe increasingly clearly into states and nations.

That required a thorough renovation in the entire European house, from the cellar to the attic, in the garden and the yard. The clerical renunciation of the right to procreation, the noble renunciation of claims on the estates of the church, and the mercantile renunciation of usury now lost their meaning and fell into disuse. The hierarchical society of early Europe that had defined both the kind and the location of the specific power to which each social order had been entitled needed to be divided by territorial boundaries in order to clarify how far the power of each monopolist extended and where it met the equal power of his peers. The relationships of sub- and super-ordination among clergy, nobility, and merchants needed to be reconfigured so that they could be reconciled with the new kind of power exercised over all of them by monarchical monopolists. Hitherto the equality of human beings had been secured by a form of Christianity that gave equal access to the sacraments to all who confessed their sins and obtained absolution. That had helped to neutralize the all-too-obvious inequities of a hierarchy subordinating serfs to free people, women to men, vassals to lords, and laity to clergy.[107] Henceforth equality would be secured through the belief in a shared human nature that bestowed equal natural rights on all who obeyed the law. Natural rights thus neutralized the no-less-obvious inequities embedded in political and social functions differentiating the subjects of the new monopolists from each other in private and in public life—so long at least as each was granted the right to give their individual consent, the chief sacrament in the modern church. Thus Christians became Italian, German, French, English, or Spanish; the knight became a soldier, the cleric a bureaucrat, the merchant an entrepreneur, and everyone the subject of a state. Hierarchy gave way to the division of labor, social rank gave way to social function, service to God became service to nature, and the church was turned into the nation.

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[107] One of the basic points made by John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200–1700," *Past and Present* 100 (1983) 29–61.

This transformation affected Europe as a whole. It is reflected in the territorial expansion of Europe into other continents no less than in the new scientific discoveries; in the relationships between the sexes no less than the relationship between rulers and ruled; the changed standing of the Jews and the new dignity awarded to the father of the house; the art of the Renaissance and the silver mines of Saxony. The invention of three-dimensional painting is a nice example because the third dimension endows the place of the observer so clearly with the right to a monopoly to which all subjects represented in the painting have to bow.[108] The transformation did not occur once and for all, but a thousand times, in steps both small and large that kept being made throughout early modern times and led in different regions with varying degrees of speed along completely different paths crisscrossing all over Europe and covering it with intricately detailed patterns of human thought and action. Those patterns are not nearly as well understood as one might think after two centuries of professional historical research.[109] Their study has been brushed aside by historians preoccupied with tracing the origins of one or another modern nation and one or another modern faith. Illuminating them in more detail is one of the most urgent desiderata for historians seeking to grasp the place of the Reformation in the history of Europe. For the purposes of this essay the following sketch, as rough as it is incomplete, will have to do.

In Italy so much power had for so long been exercised by highly urbanized mercantile elites that it is virtually impossible to speak about the Italian aristocracy in separation from banking, business, and trade. The splendid residences within the perimeters of the Italian towns speak for themselves. In Italy urban elites had managed at a particularly early time to create monopolies that were perhaps not always large in terms of geographical extent, but were remarkably successful instances of concentrated wealth and power applied with precocious equality to all inhabitants, cleric as well as lay, military as well as mercantile. The laity had for a long time been accustomed to use the literate methods of the clerisy for their own purposes. By the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the clergy were already so fully integrated into the society of the Italian towns that lay elites were able to write and speak for themselves with great eloquence in their own language and in Latin. The close biographical relationships between canonists and humanists in papal service—as for example in the cases of Petrarch and Alberti—is only one of the more charming clues to the characteristic history of the Italian laity.

In France, by contrast, the military aristocracy had maintained considerably more independence from other sectors of society. True, the French nobility did find itself confronted with a monarchy that was only too eager to work closely together with the papacy in order to subject bishops and noblemen to their authority. Eventually the French monarchy therefore succeeded in concentrating far more power over a much

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[108] For some trenchant observations see Paul Feyerabend, "Progress in Philosophy, the Sciences and the Arts," *Farewell to Reason* (New York 1987) 143–161; and, from a different point of view, the celebrated opening chapter on "Las Meninas" in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York 1971).

[109] For an instructive exception illustrating the manner in which a European-wide process could take on regional variations see Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (Berkeley 1988), where the inquisition of southern Europe is viewed as something of a functional equivalent to witchcraft and magic persecutions in northern Europe.

larger territory in its hands than the Italian cities were capable of doing. But that took longer, too. The grand experiment with a Franco-papal alliance fell apart during the Hundred Years War, not least because the papacy's universal claims did not make the creation of national papacies any more possible then than they are now. Gallicanism preserved a stature and independence for the French clergy that the Italian clergy had long lost. It was not until the days of Louis XIV that the nobility of France was finally domesticated in Versailles.

England was similar to France in that it produced a territorial monarchy out of the competition among a military aristocracy, and similar to the Italian city-states in that its forms of governance firmly embraced all layers of society. Whether because of Anglo-Saxon precedent, the Norman Conquest, repeated experience with rebellion and civil war, the geography of a large island, or all of the above, England developed a form of monarchical government in whose operations nobility, clergy, and townsmen were more closely involved from early on than in France or the Germanies. Domesday Book is singular in European history. So are the early medieval English codes of law, the Exchequer, and the representative institutions developed for the government of the realm in the thirteenth century. England was the only European country that managed to produce a professional class of jurists who were not trained at universities but at the Inns of Court, did not rely on Latin but on Anglo-French, and did not receive Roman law in a formal sense but only as a model, relying for the rest on precedent and customary law. England is the only European state that was not only able to create a national church—the Gallicans managed to do that, too—but also to keep it running until today.

In the Germanies, by contrast, the fusion of nobility and clergy into the subjects of a political monopoly encountered greater obstacles than in Italy, Spain, France, or England. In the Germanies the attempt to reshape the early medieval clergy into a single, coherently structured body of literate celibates increasingly following the model established by the great monastic houses and led with increasing efficiency from Rome—which is to say, the main theme of the developments culminating in the Investiture Controversy—had encountered such powerful resistance that the tacit social contract designed to settle relations between nobility, clergy, and merchants was never put into more than piecemeal effect. Confronted with the hostility of an emperor who commanded by far the most powerful temporal government in eleventh-century Europe, Rome had hardly had any choice but to reduce its aspirations to rule over the German clergy, at least for the time being. In Italy the papacy could count on the support of cities, and in England and France it could count on the support of monarchies. But in Germany there were no cities that could have stood comparison with those of Italy, and there was no monarch as well disposed toward the papacy as the king of France. Germany did not acquire its first universities until the fourteenth century, two to three centuries later than England, Italy, and France. And German cities grew only in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to a size and power that gave them the self-confidence and the critical mass of an educated laity long since available in Italy. The result has been well understood since the research of Aloys Schulte early in the twentieth century: the German nobility maintained its control over the church to

a degree that made it appear to be illiterate by comparison with the nobility of Italy, France, and England, and made the clergy seem corrupt.[110]

There is therefore a sense in which the conditions that had allowed the Gregorian Reformation to succeed in Italy, France, and England during the high Middle Ages did not obtain in the Germanies until the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. That helps to explain why late medieval Germany was at first so particularly eager to promote the reform of the church that the Great Schism had made necessary, and why it drew with such great fervor on the medieval tradition of furthering the causes of the church by means of general councils. The Councils of Constance and Basel were the first general councils ever to meet on German soil and popular piety flourished in late medieval Germany as never before.[111] Yet the same circumstances may also explain why soon thereafter the Germanies broke, not just with the conciliar tradition, but with the Roman church itself in such a brutal and explosive manner that forever after they remained roughly evenly divided between two hostile confessions that were neither able to reconcile their differences nor to gain control over each other. No other large European country shared that fate.

The chief loser in all of this was doubtless the church. Thanks to its Roman inheritance and thanks to the monastic orders, the church had long known best just what it means to have a monopoly and how to put a stop to competition.[112] As early as the turn of the millennium the church had systematically not only claimed the right to a monopoly, but also managed to enforce that right against its imperial and episcopal rivals. In the papacy, the councils, the legates, the orders, the universities, and not least in canon law the church had created institutions with an authority that literally— by means of letters—spread over all of European society, outclassing by a considerable margin whatever military and urban elites were able to put into the field. In the military orders it had created its own armies and in the crusades its own war. The church had been the sole institution of genuinely European standing. Now it was forced to surrender power to rivals who had learned to imitate its methods. That was so much the bitterer in that the church had thought itself to be above the competitive fray. The lasting symbol for the bitterness of that defeat is the revealing contrast in which the small size of the Vatican State stands to the universal ambitions of its ruler.

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[110] Aloys Schulte, *Der Adel und die deutsche Kirche im Mittelalter: Studien zur Sozialrechts- und Kirchengeschichte* (Stuttgart 1910); cf. John B. Freed, *The Friars and German Society in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA 1977); Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215–1272, with Special Reference to the Lateran Council of 1215* (London 1934).

[111] Bernd Moeller, "Religious Life in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation," *Pre-Reformation Germany*, ed. Gerald Strauss (New York 1972) 13–42; Moeller, "Piety in Germany Around 1500" (n. 26 above) 50–75; Berndt Hamm, "Normative Zentrierung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert: Beobachtungen zu Religiosität, Theologie und Ikonologie," *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 26 (1999) 163–202.

[112] Walter Ullmann often exaggerated the degree to which the church exercised power from above, but not entirely without reason; see Walter Ullmann, *The Relevance of Medieval Ecclesiastical History: An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge 1966); Walter Ullmann, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power*, 3rd ed. (London 1970); and the searing critique by Francis Oakley, "Celestial Hierarchies Revisited: Walter Ullmann's Vision of Medieval Politics," *Past and Present* 60 (1973) 3–48, repr. in Francis Oakley, *Politics and Eternity: Studies in the History of Medieval and Early-Modern Political Thought* (Leiden 1999) 25–72.

The church's loss is poorly understood in terms of secularization, much less of progress, though elements of both may be discerned.[113] Laicization might be a better term because it refers to the reproduction of spiritual government in the hands of the laity without necessarily denoting either a secular break with spiritual government or Protestant emancipation from Catholic repression.[114] But the search for a single term is more distracting than enlightening. "Laicization," after all, can also be taken to refer to anti-clerical attitudes accompanying the transfer of clerical authority into lay hands. What matters is that the church did not lose because its methods had been rejected by the laity but quite the contrary, because the laity had finally learned the lessons it had for so long studied in the church's schools. Now the laity demanded the right to exercise those methods in its own name and language. Now it was time to graduate. The monopoly over the control of letters that the clergy had asserted and on which its power had chiefly rested was taken out of its hands—but it did not by any means disintegrate. Instead, it was placed into the hands of the laity, where it was henceforth put to more intensive uses, no longer under the guidance of the papacy, but in the chambers and bureaus of courts and city governments, no longer by celibate priests and monks, but by ministers, scholars, and scientists in the employ of the state. The power of the church was not dismantled or destroyed, but enhanced and transferred to state and nation. The nation is the church of the modern age and the state is its chief agent.[115] It prays at the altar of nature, receives its sacraments from priests of science, and is granted absolution for past sins by historians. Hobbes was the first who saw that clearly, and in this particular respect Rousseau explicitly agreed with him, pointedly stating that Hobbes owed his worst enemies, not to the mistakes he made, but to the truths that he uncovered.[116]

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[113] Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA 1983), is right to question the concept of secularization, but for reasons almost diametrically opposed to those advocated here; cf. Hermann Lübbe, *Säkularisierung: Geschichte eines ideenpolitischen Begriffs* (Freiburg 1965); Heiko A. Oberman, *Contra vanam curiositatem: Ein Kapitel der Theologie zwischen Seelenwinkel und Weltall* (Zürich 1974).

[114] Joseph R. Strayer, "The Laicization of French and English Society in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 15 (1940) 76–86, repr. in *Medieval Statecraft and the Perspectives of History: Essays by Joseph R. Strayer*, ed. J. F. Benton and T. N. Bisson (Princeton 1971) 251–264. Cf. Georges de Lagarde, *La naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du Moyen Age*, 6 vols., 2nd ed. (Paris 1942–1948); and Michael Stolleis, "'Konfessionalisierung' oder 'Säkularisierung' bei der Entstehung des frühmodernen Staates," *Ius commune: Zeitschrift für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte* 20 (1993) 1–23.

[115] Richard W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, Pelican History of the Church, 2 (Harmondsworth 1970) 24, maintains that "The Middle Ages may be defined as the period in western European history when the church could reasonably claim to be the one true state, and when men (however much they might differ about the nature of ecclesiastical and secular power) acted on the assumption that the church had an overriding political authority." Figgis, *Studies of Political Thought* (n. 27 above) 4, put it more strongly: "In the Middle Ages the Church was not a State, it was the State; the State or rather the civil authority (for a separate society was not recognized) was merely the police department of the Church."

[116] "The laws of God, therefore, are none but the laws of nature, whereof the principal is that we should not violate our faith, that is, a commandment to obey our civil sovereigns, which we constituted over us by mutual pact with one another. ... So that the faith of Christians ever since our Saviour's time hath had for foundation, first, the reputation of their pastors, and afterward, the authority of those that made the Old and New Testament to be received for the rule of faith—which none could do but Christian sovereigns, who are therefore the supreme pastors, and the only persons whom Christians now hear speak from God—except such as God speaketh to, in these days, supernaturally." Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 43, "Of what is Necessary for a Man's Reception into the Kingdom of Heaven," sec. 5, ed. Edwin Curley (Indianapolis 1994) 399–400. Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, bk. 4, chap. 8, ed. Robert Derathé, Collec-

The change that came over Europe in early modern times thus has a double aspect. On the one hand, it forced the church to give up power; on the other hand, it put the church's power into the hands of the laity, where it was used to new and improved effect. Seen from up close by its protagonists, it marks a break from the preceding history and the beginning of a new stage in the development of European society. In that sense, Luther was the papacy's implacable opponent, leading Protestant Germans thereafter to insist on what distinguished them from Catholic Italians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards, and to forget how much they had in common. Seen from afar, it marks the completion of the transformation of Europe that began in the eleventh century. In that sense Luther may be regarded as the true heir of Pope Gregory VII, and the indulgence controversy as the last chapter in the history of the Investiture Controversy—the moment when monk Hildebrand's desire to fix the boundary between the sacred and the profane at last took hold of the lands farthest removed from Roman antiquity; the moment when the spirit of Pope Gregory VII came to life again in Martin Luther and finally secured the victory over Saxony that Emperor Henry IV had prevented in the eleventh century.

For an illuminating case in point, take relations between men and women. On the one hand, the Protestant attack on clerical celibacy and the elevation of marriage helped to break up the male monopoly on the sacred that the church had claimed during the Middle Ages. Yet on the other hand the father of the household thereby acquired a new kind of male monopoly that was neither identical with that of the medieval priest nor unrelated to it either. "Church" comes from the Greek *kurios*, "lord"; it means "house of the lord." During the later Middle Ages, religious lay women's increasingly pronounced assertion of their right to compete with men for access to the sacred had caused growing anxiety about the durability of the monopoly the clergy had exercised over the "house of the lord" since the eleventh century.[117] By taking religious power out of the clergy's hands, placing it into those of the father of the family, making each father a new kind of spiritual lord in his own house, and turning his house into a little church, the Reformation put a stop to that anxiety.

Thus Protestants, while seeming to break with Catholics, did nothing more effectively than to reinforce a hierarchical distinction between men and women that had once been a special prerogative of the clergy by extending its reach into the intimacies of private and domestic life for the remainder of modern history.[118] With its left hand the Reformation forced the reverend fathers of the church to surrender their authority; with its right hand the Reformation gave that authority to the father of the family—

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tion Folio essais, 233 (Paris 1964) 285, in English *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge 1997) 146: "Of all Christian Authors the philosopher Hobbes is the only one who clearly saw the evil and the remedy, who dared to propose reuniting the two heads of the eagle, and to return everything to political unity, without which no State or Government will ever be well constituted. But he must have seen that the domineering spirit of Christianity was inconsistent with his system, and that the interest of the Priest would always be stronger than that of the State. It is not so much what is horrible and false as what is just and true in his politics that has made it odious." Cf. Constantin Fasolt, "Sovereignty and Heresy," *Infinite Boundaries: Order, Disorder, and Reorder in Early Modern German Culture*, ed. Max Reinhart, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, 40 (Kirksville, MO 1998) 381–391.

[117] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (n. 80 above).

[118] Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA 1983); Wunder, *He is the Sun, She Is the Moon* (n. 38 above); Wiesner, *Women and Gender* (n. 38 above).

and made sure to exempt his conduct from undue interference by the state just as the papacy had once made sure to exempt the conduct of the clergy from undue interference by the laity. What had been benefit of clergy became the sacrosanctity of hearth and home. The views of Jean Bodin, the first great theorist of sovereignty in the history of modern political thought and by no means coincidentally an avowed admirer of Pope Innocent IV's ideas about absolute power, make for a telling combination: uncertain in his religious affiliation, but utterly confident in his insistence on the father's right to rule his house and family with an authority as absolute as any sovereign's right to rule the commonwealth.[119]

On this understanding the Reformation loses its singularity. It no longer amounts to a break with the preceding development of Europe but, quite the contrary, its continuation and even intensification. It was part and parcel of a single process of social development that began around the turn of the millennium, that was European-wide, that was carried forward by Protestants and Catholics alike, and that continued without interruption across the temporal and spatial boundaries conventionally placed between the European nations and medieval and modern history. That process transcends the local, temporal, political, social, and intellectual differences between the European nations (Germany, Italy, Spain, France, England, …) as well as those between the confessions (Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Gallicans, Puritans, Jansenists, Pietists, Methodists, Baptists, …) without extinguishing their historical significance. It did not have to wait for the Reformation to make asceticism inner-worldly.[120] It shaped European history as early as Pope Gregory VII's struggle with Emperor Henry IV and as late as Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* with the Catholic church. It forms a background to the whole of European history. Indeed, it *is* the history of Europe. The Reformation merely opened a new chapter in that history. It made for a change of scenery, advanced the plot, and heightened the drama. But it did not change the script. It passed on to the early modern laity what the medieval clergy

[119] Note specially the approval with which Bodin referred to a law of Romulus allowing the husband to kill his wife "without any formal process of law … when she was taken in adultery, for substituting a child not his own, for having duplicate keys, or for being habitually drunk," his restriction of citizenship to heads of households, and the complementary relationship between the roles taken by citizens in public and fathers at home: "When the head of the family leaves the household over which he presides and joins with other heads of families in order to treat of those things which are of common interest, he ceases to be a lord and master, and becomes an equal and associate with the rest. He sets aside his private concerns to attend to public affairs. In so doing he ceases to be a master and becomes a citizen, and a citizen may be defined as a free subject dependent on the authority of another," namely, the sovereign; Jean Bodin, "Six Books of a Commonweale," *Early Modern Europe: Crisis of Authority*, ed. Eric Cochrane, Charles M. Gray, and Mark A. Kishlansky (Chicago 1987) 231, 237. Concerning Pope Innocent IV Bodin maintained that he "best understood what absolute power is, and made {Christian} kings and emperors bow to him." Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed. and trans. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge 1992) 13.

[120] Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* (n. 16 above), was right to focus on inner-worldly asceticism as crucial to the history of modern Europe, but wrong to seek its sources in Protestantism. Like so many other developments supposedly originating in the Reformation, inner-worldy asceticism, too, is much better understood as grounded in high medieval changes that, among many other things, led the secular (!) clergy to adopt monastic ways of life: "Converting the world into a school or foyer for heaven," as John Mundy put it, "the clergy began to absorb the intense sense of vocation that had once marked the withdrawn religious." Mundy, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (n. 6 above) 16. Cf. Hugh R. Trevor-Roper, "Religion, the Reformation and Social Change," *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays* (New York 1969) 1–45; Hartmut Lehmann and Guenther Roth, eds. *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts* (Cambridge 1993).

learned from monks. A new theology appeared, but in the service of a goal that had long since been fixed.

Nor is the Reformation German. The Reformation rather is the conscious German expression of an unconscious social transformation that took place in all of Europe, differing here and there according to the circumstances shaping it differently in different regions, always depending on the success with which the church had previously exercised its claims to leadership, the compromises it had been forced to make, and the extent to which the laity had managed to assert its mastery of the church's methods. In Italy the same unconscious transformation found conscious expression under a different name in movements now known as Renaissance and Humanism. The national peculiarities of Germany, England, France, Italy, and Spain are neither essential marks on their respective national bodies nor are they merely figments of the imagination. They reflect the differential speed and intensity with which the cultural leadership of the church first spread all over Europe and was then taken over by the laity. To view the Reformation in terms extending no further back in time than somewhere in the late Middle Ages, no further out in space than where Germany meets Italy and France, and no deeper in thought than where Protestants disagree with Catholics is to force it into a frame too small to fit historical reality.

HEGEL'S GHOST

The case proposed on the preceding pages proves, I hope, that it is possible to view the Reformation as part of European-wide developments beginning around the turn of the millennium. To prove that it is possible is obviously not enough to prove that it is true. But it is enough to pinpoint the reason why the possibility that it is true has been ignored. That reason consists of the understanding that Protestant reformers and their opponents had of each other and themselves. From the perspective of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, King Henry VIII, John Eck, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, or Pope Paul IV, the Reformation was obviously nothing like a continuation of the endeavors of the Catholic church. Never mind how many similarities between Protestants and Catholics historians can document today, and how energetically Protestant reformers in fact accelerated processes that had been started by the Catholic church, in their own minds there was no doubt that they had broken with tradition (or, making the same point in reverse, that for the first time in centuries they had succeeded in restoring the true faith of the ancient church) and therefore cast Europe into religious war. Everywhere, but specially in Germany—from Hutten and Luther down to Hegel and Ranke—the break with the tradition went closely hand in hand with new forms of affection for one's nation, and new forms of denouncing the nation of another.[121] There was no double aspect to Luther's understanding of himself.

The self-understanding of the protagonists in the early modern transformation of European society is obviously crucial for the history of the Reformation. But it is not to be confused with a proper understanding of that history. If we are to form an under-

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[121] On the relationship between nationalism and the Reformation in general see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London 1991). Cf. Orest Ranum, ed. *National Consciousness, History, and Political Culture in Early-Modern Europe* (Baltimore 1975); Ludwig Schmugge, "Über 'nationale' Vorurteile im Mittelalter," *Deutsches Archiv* 38 (1982) 439–459.

standing of our own—one that does not simply repeat what the contemporaries thought but puts their thought into historical perspective—the agents' self-understanding must neither be ignored nor left untouched. It must rather be taken as a historically necessary precondition for the good conscience they needed to promote their cause under the circumstances of their time and place. The less experience they had with the church and its methods, the more they needed to fortify themselves in order to be able to rebel against the sacred authority of the pope, take it into their hands themselves, and thus violate the great taboo of medieval Europe. Germany, where the church had until recently been kept at a noble distance from the laity, required all of the good conscience that Luther's theology was able to lay upon the table. People like Machiavelli and Guicciardini lived closer to the metropolis. Their intimacy with the church was such that they never had to break with it officially. And since they did not need to break with it, they could do without the theology that was elsewhere needed urgently in order to legitimate rebellion. The Protestant self-consciousness of having broken with the medieval past is no good evidence against the underlying continuity. It should instead be seen as part of that continuity—the engine that moved the process forward by convincing the participants of the justice of their cause.

The same case should be made for Catholics, but with the parameters reversed. In Catholic self-understanding the Catholic church did the opposite of what the Protestants were doing: it maintained an immutable tradition. But that does not disprove the reality of changes in Catholicism any more than the Protestant self-understanding of having broken with the past disproves the underlying continuity. On the contrary, the importance attributed by modern Catholicism to its own immutability contrasts sharply with the innovative spirit displayed by its high medieval predecessor in the creation of an entire new body of canon law, new orders, new forms of religious life, and a church government the likes of which had never been seen before.[122] The Catholic insistence on continuity without rupture and the Protestant insistence on rupture without continuity are mutually reinforcing distortions of the process by which the power of the medieval church was transferred to the modern laity and reproduced in secular forms.

Thus it is possible at last to give an answer to the question from which source Hegel's ghost has drawn its uncanny ability to prevail over the tools of critical historical analysis and continue to assert the singularity of *the* Reformation against all new and old attempts to show the opposite. It has drawn that ability from the historians themselves. When they speak about the Reformation, they now rarely do so with the unselfconscious pride in nation and confession that was common a century ago. But they continue to identify with the self-understanding of early modern Europeans as Protestants and Catholics, Reformers and Counter-reformers, Germans and Italians, French and English, humanists and theologians to a degree of which they are not sufficiently aware.[123] That blinds them to the commonalities of European history.[124]

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[122] As Geoffrey Barraclough put it, "It is one of the great paradoxes of history that the papacy, as we think of it today, is in most essential ways a creation of medieval Europe." Barraclough, *Medieval Papacy* (n. 6 above) 9.

[123] Bernd Moeller himself may be taken as a case in point. He is widely acknowledged to have played a crucial role in reclaiming the history of the Reformation from theologians. But it is often forgotten that he

To blame them for that would be both churlish and unfair. Historians might just as well be praised for the unswerving loyalty with which they keep repeating principles laid down by their precursors. Historians are, after all, the lineal descendants of the same early modern humanists and reformers who did the most to put the self-understanding of early modern Europeans into a lasting set of words. Small wonder that historians identify with people to whom they owe their own professional existence. Small wonder that, all efforts to the contrary notwithstanding and sometimes to their own surprise, they keep arriving at an understanding of early modern times that does nothing more successfully than to confirm the power of the very national and confessional boundaries whose history they had intended to illuminate. Nothing else should be expected until historians learn how to distance themselves from national and confessional criteria to a point where they can either openly acknowledge their personal belief in them or treat them as the fossilized remainders of the comparisons that early modern Europeans used once upon a time to make with each other and their forebears in order to determine who they were and what they ought to do in circumstances long since gone.

This diagnosis applies directly to the combination of Reformation history with social history that has in recent decades done so much to cast fresh doubt upon the significance of confessional and national criteria for our understanding of the Reformation. It explains why the social history of the Reformation still consents to chronological, conceptual, and geographical boundaries first drawn by early modern humanists and theologians. The echoes of early modern history reverberate only too audibly in the contemporary scholarship. In order for historians to stop fighting early modern battles it is not enough to extend historical investigations into the realm of society—as if the concept of *the* Reformation would not have to be entirely rethought; as if salting the Reformation with social history would be enough to change the ingredients from which the dish was made. It is not enough to add complexity and diversity by showing how *the* Reformation in one context differed from *the* Reformation in another. It is not enough to refrain from national or confessional polemics or to extend the history of the Reformation into the later Middle Ages. The history of the Reformation must begin, not with Luther, but with Pope Gregory VII; not with the indulgence controversy, but with the Investiture Controversy; not with Germany in the sixteenth century, but with Europe in the eleventh century.

sought to reclaim it for *church* history, insisted on Luther's role as a theologian, and stressed the spiritual value of the Reformation: "To put it in a nutshell, it seems that we are threatened with losing the Reformation as an event in *church* history. … We have scarcely come to terms with the most basic, incongruous, and unprecedented aspect of the whole Reformation: that it was a theologian who unleashed a revolution in world history and forced his rule on that revolution, and what is more, that he was the most profound of all the theologians. … We need the spiritual and intellectual energies the Reformation has to offer." Bernd Moeller, "Problems of Reformation Research," *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (n. 23 above) 7, 12–13, 16 (emphasis in the original). The invocation of those "spiritual energies" is essential to the project Moeller started. It tends to be forgotten because it cannot be remembered without provoking the very disagreements over confessional and national boundaries contemporary Reformation historians have been trying to allay.

[124] For two exceptions from the history of literature see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton 1990); and Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton 1953). Theodore K. Rabb, *The Struggle for Stability in Early Modern Europe* (New York 1975), places a similar emphasis on the need to examine European-wide developments, but without tracing them back beyond the late Middle Ages.

What we call Europe did not even exist until the high Middle Ages.[125] What did exist was an assemblage of barbarian successor states to the Roman Empire that could not hold a candle to the Byzantine Empire in the Southeast or Islamic Civilization in the South and West. The ability of one unusually aggressive and long-lived chief astutely combining the surviving vestiges of Roman imperial governance with shrewd diplomacy and ruthless military force to gain control over a large swathe of the continent within borders that foreshadow the political and cultural shape of modern Europe does not suffice to prove the opposite. Charlemagne spent most of his life on horseback. He had no capital that could compare with the brilliance of Constantinople, Baghdad, or Córdoba. And the realm he cobbled together fell apart soon after he died. It was only around the beginning of the second millennium that Europe acquired political, social, and legal institutions durable enough to survive the demise of a ruler and sustain a distinctly European culture. These were the foundations on which Europe created for itself a uniquely governmental church, a system of national states, a vibrant agricultural economy, self-governing urban republics, and the rest of the features commonly included in the inventory of European accomplishments. These were the means enabling Europe to reshape the culture of the continent in the process Robert Bartlett has called the Europeanization of Europe, and later on to extend its reach across the globe.[126] If there was a fundamental break in European history, then its coordinates were neither national nor confessional, and it occurred either five centuries before the Reformation, in Moore's *First European Revolution*, or three centuries later, in the demographic transition, industrialization, and massive urbanization of the nineteenth century.

From this perspective early modern theological inventions, the humanistic turn to classical antiquity, the point of transition when the internal colonization of Europe spilled over into external colonization, the invention of printing, the so-called discovery of the New World, the so-called scientific revolution, and the various other early modern developments to which the Reformation has traditionally been linked have only subordinate significance for the periodization of European history. Primary significance goes to the development of European society and culture as a whole. By this criterion, the early Middle Ages have to be viewed as part and parcel of antiquity: the tail-end of a long-drawn-out process of disaggregation by which the urbanized Mediterranean civilization of Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman antiquity came to be divided into a Greek-Orthodox East, an Arabic-Islamic South, and a Latin-Germanic West. The centuries around the turn of the millennium make for a new beginning in the history of a Latin-Germanic world best understood by contrast with the worlds of Byzantium and Islam: the First European Revolution. The high and late Middle Ages become the early (medieval) phase of European history properly speaking. The later (modern) phase of that same history includes the demographic transition, the industrial revolution, and the scientific mastery of nature—changes of such magnitude

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[125] For a contrary position making an unusually interesting and original case for seeking the origin of Europe's peculiar history (mostly) in the early Middle Ages see Michael Mitterauer, *Warum Europa? Mittelalterliche Grundlagen eines Sonderwegs* (München 2003); cf. the periodization of B. H. Slicher van Bath, *The Agrarian History of Western Europe, A.D. 500–1850*, trans. Olive Ordish (London 1963).

[126] Bartlett, "The Europeanization of Europe," *The Making of Europe* (n. 5 above) 269–291; cf. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York 1989).

that they displaced not only the three successors to Mediterranean antiquity from the prominent station they had occupied in the history of the world so far, but also every other one among the great agrarian civilizations that had spread across the world since the invention of agriculture during the Neolithic.

That is the frame of reference in which the Reformation must be placed. Otherwise the question about the relationship between the Reformation and the Middle Ages as a whole will remain as impossible to answer as it was forty years ago, when Bernd Moeller charged historians with having lost sight of it.[127] The task is to explain the Reformation, the nations, and the confessions by writing the history of European society as a whole, without assuming the nation or the confession as a given.[128] The relationship between the Reformation and social history must be reversed. The history of society must come first, and it must dictate its own terms. Only thereafter can the history of nations and confessions be properly understood. For society—by which I mean human beings and the constantly changing relationships in which they engage with each other—is the proper subject matter of historical investigation.[129] *The* Reformation is merely the form that subject matter took on a particular occasion in a particular area of Europe.

Historians who really wish to make a radical break from the confessional and national narratives that have dominated Reformation historiography since the nineteenth century must therefore learn how to begin the history of the Reformation around the turn of the millennium. As long as they continue to begin in late medieval and early modern times, they will unwittingly endorse the old agreement between Catholics and Protestants that the main question is whether you ought to side with or against the governmental church that was established in the eleventh century. Even if they do not regard the Reformation as the single most important movement in European history since the collapse of the Roman Empire and do not openly identify with one or another nation or confession, they will continue to be fighting Hegel's ghost.

EPILOGUE

One question is worth asking in conclusion: so what? What difference does it make to substitute one kind of periodization for another? Does it amount to anything more than restating in slightly different and perhaps more dubious terms what we knew all along? The answer is, I think it does.

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[127] "We have nearly lost sight of the historical problems of the *relationship of the Reformation as a whole to the Middle Ages*. This is the question of how Europe was made ready for the Reformation, of how the Reformation broke away from the Middle Ages, and of how the Middle Ages survived within the Reformation." Bernd Moeller, "Problems of Reformation Research," *Imperial Cities and the Reformation* (n. 23 above) 12 (emphasis in the original).

[128] Notwithstanding his sharp focus on the 16th c., the radical spirit of Febvre's conclusion to "The Origins of the French Reformation" (n. 18 above) 88, is still very much to the point: "Specificity, dating and nationality are words which need to be struck off the historian's vocabulary list. They are problems of no substance—stuffy old controversial subjects, old cast-offs which still lie around in our books of learning. The task which all of us have before us is to undertake a methodical study of Christianity at the beginning of the sixteenth century, an analysis of that great crisis from which for some it emerged rejuvenated and renewed, for others diminished and mortally wounded. We must not swerve from a comprehensive study of that century which was so full of consequences. No single generation of historians will be able to complete it. All the more reason to concentrate our efforts and not to waste them in sterile repetition."

[129] As Elias explained particularly clearly and convincingly in his "Introduction to the 1968 Edition" *The Civilizing Process* (n. 19 above) 181–215.

It is of course completely true that many different criteria can be used to divide the past into distinct periods. The humanists relied on the quality of Latin. The Protestants relied on a certain interpretation of Scripture. Germans relied on their relationship to the Roman Empire. And so on. Speaking in the abstract, each of these criteria is just as useful as the others. All other things being equal, dividing world history into periods according to the frequency of references to Cicero is just as useful as dividing it according to the number of eggs eaten boiled, fried, or poached, or the volume of carbon dioxide humans have placed into the atmosphere. From that point of view historical periodization is nothing but an arbitrary fancy, and my choice of Europe's social development as a criterion of periodization merely one among indefinitely many equally arbitrary possibilities no worse or better than the others.

But all other things are never equal. The choice of the criteria we use to settle questions of periodization cannot be made in the abstract. It is made in the context of the same history whose periodization is at stake. That context is given and concrete, and therefore subject to debate and to historical development. It changes as time goes on. So do, accordingly, criteria of periodization. Their changes are themselves a clue to history. They are by no means arbitrary or abstract, and they cannot be made at will. There are good reasons—reasons rooted in history—why the succession of four different world monarchies once served as an attractive criterion with which to divide the history of the world into successive periods. There are good reasons, too, why that form of periodization lost its attractiveness, and why it was replaced with the division into ancient, medieval, and modern history.

The same is true today. Today neither nations nor confessions—and certainly not the quality of Latin—play the role they did five hundred years ago. Today it is difficult not to reckon with two points that militate against the role traditionally assigned to the Reformation in the periodization of European history. One is the right of all human beings, male and female, young and old, to stake their own claims on the world. That right demands that we write history in light of the restrictions placed on it at different times and places by social, political, and intellectual contingencies allowing some to gather more than their fair share of power, wealth, and knowledge, without respect to "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin," to quote a standard formulation from American employment law. The other is the amazing lack of respect for custom and tradition—both their own and that of others—with which Europeans of every confession and every nationality have ever since the eleventh century sought to remake the world in their own image. Intramural differences between Protestants and Catholics or between medieval and modern Europeans merely conceal that central fact of European history. Until that fact is properly acknowledged, historians will not know how to assess the mixture of admiration and hostility with which Europeans have been encountered across the globe.

The conventional periodization of European history is therefore more than just a harmless means of laying out the past. It is a crucial ingredient in the unconscious grandiosity with which Europeans have asserted their superiority over the rest of the world. Hegel's confidence that modern Europe—what he called the Germanic world—stood at the pinnacle of history, towering high above medieval Catholicism, ancient republics, and Oriental despotism, is merely an unusually salient instance of

that grandiosity. His ghost hovers not only over the history of the Reformation, but also over Europe's relations to the rest of the world. To challenge the traditional periodization of European history is therefore more than an exercise in chronology. It is a necessary step in the pursuit of a perspective that does justice to European history without endorsing Europe's lack of self-understanding.

That is the perspective from which I have tried to sketch the history of the Reformation. There is of course no guarantee that my sketch, even assuming that it is found to be convincing, will at some future point in time not look as quaint as sketches of world history based on the succession of Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman monarchies look today. Far be it therefore from me to maintain that the perspective I have proposed is uniquely valid. I have my doubts about its validity, and in another setting I would be glad to share them with my readers. But that would require a discussion, not of the relative weight to be attributed to the changes wrought at different times in European society, the degree to which those changes can be explained by combining Elias's "monopoly mechanism" with Gellner's "general form of the social structure of agrarian societies," or the need to expand the frame of reference from Europe to the world, but rather of the purpose and the limits of our knowledge of the past itself.[130]

In the present setting I have tried to make a simpler and more restricted point, namely, that the national and confessional blinkers worn by historians of the Reformation remain much bigger than they like to think. I have tried to reveal the extent to which, all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, Reformation history continues to be written in the name of nation and confession. I have tried to do so by showing that it is possible to think about the place of the Reformation in European history in terms as far removed from those most commonly employed by professional historians today as scholarship, a certain familiarity with medieval and early modern history, and the limits of my historical imagination allowed me to take them. Whether or not I have succeeded I leave my readers to decide.

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[130] The kind of discussion I tried to conduct in *Limits of History* (n. 3 above).